BUSINESS / B1

’06 budget deficit hits 7-year low of P62.2B; analysts see ratings upgrade

SPORTS / A25

Villaroman, Bayron join 6-way lead with 68s in RP Open

METRO / A22

Chaos erupts at Pasay City Hall when ousted officials try to reclaim posts

ACROSS / A15

Frost ruins P10M worth of Benguet veggies in subzero temperatures

Mike D taps star maker Boy Abunda for campaign

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

STAR MAKERS—AND BOXERS—MAY BE TOday's "kingmakers"?

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor thinks so after he announced that television host and talent manager Boy Abunda would be among his core advisers in his bid for the Senate in May.

MIKE D/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Friday, February 2, 2007 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 56 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Red leader ‘Joma’ takes revolution to YouTube

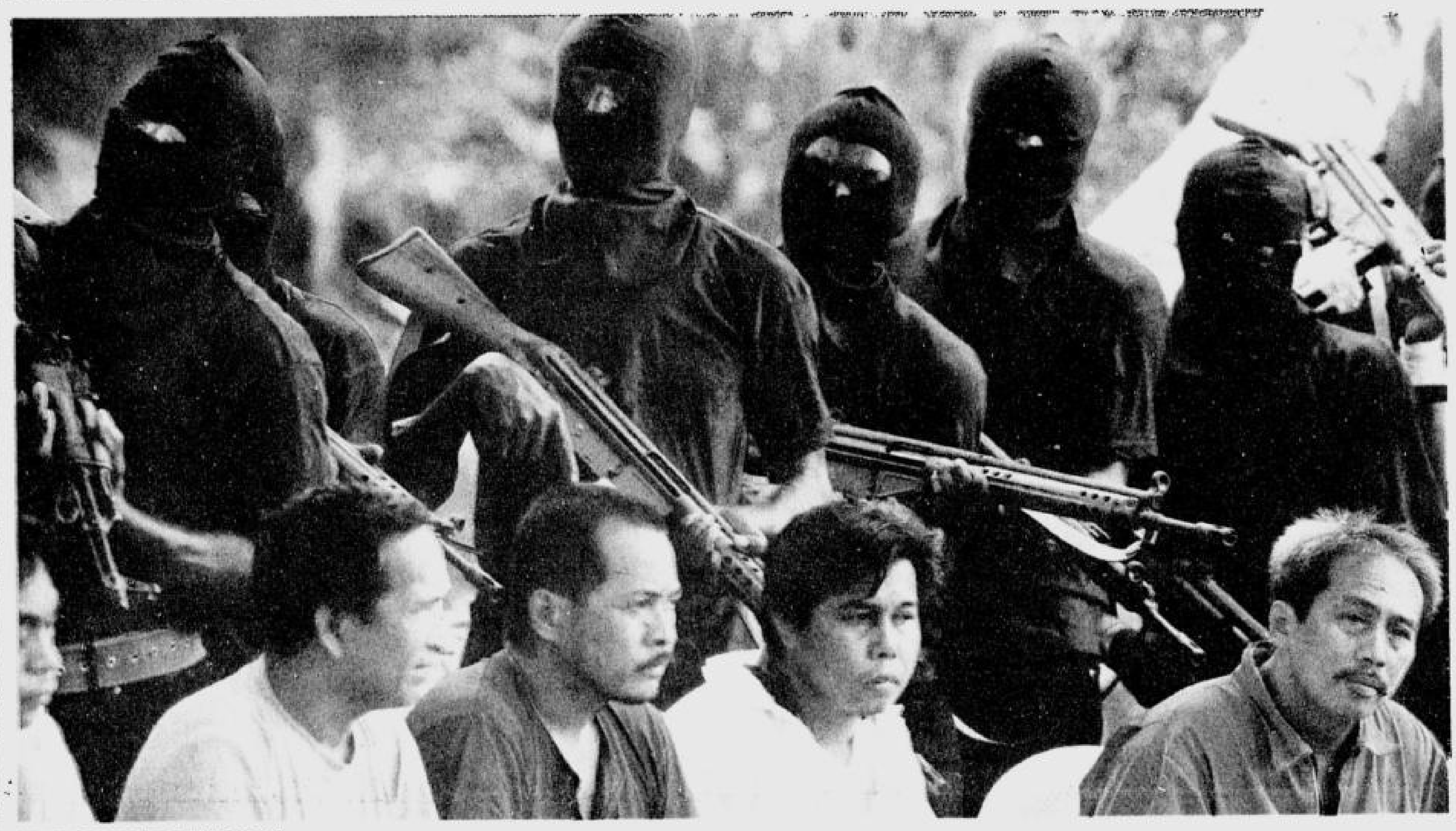
By Volt Contreras

LOOKS LIKE EVEN "JOMA" HAS TO CATCH UP with the digital revolution if he wants to pursue his.

This is basically why two songs by Jose Ma. Sison—founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines, icon to Asia's longest-running Maoist insurgency, and a "terrorist" in the eyes

RED LEADER/ A8

Bombing in Metro foiled



12 DAYS IN CAPTIVITY
This photo of the kidnapped Filipinos was taken by Reuters on Wednesday, Jan. 31. Kidnapped from a German-operated cargo ship, 24 Filipinos are being held at an undisclosed location on the creeks of the Niger Delta. The militants are demanding the release of two of their leaders in exchange for the freedom of the hostages. The DFA says it was concerned about the health of at least seven sailors who were reported by the Nigerian press to be critically ill. *(See story on Page A20.)* REUTERS

Moro killed, 3 nabbed in Rizal raid

By Alcuin Papa

POLICE AND MARINES RAIDed a suspected Moro terrorist hideout on an island in Laguna Lake yesterday, killing one man, arresting three others and foiling what one official described as a possible bomb attack in the capital similar to the one carried out on Valentine’s Day two years ago.

Moving before dawn, the raiders used rubber rafts to slip into Barangay Sta. Ana, Taytay, Rizal, surround two lakeside houses and engage in a five-minute gun battle the men inside led by Sandiali Utto, described as a ranking member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front’s Special Operations Group.

Sandiali Utto and two aides, identified as Jukarnen Utto and Alimuddin Abdullah, were arrested. Another aide, Mohammad Utto, was shot and killed as he attempted to toss a grenade, said Senior Supt. Asher Dolina, chief of Metro Manila’s Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) who led the assault.

Dolina said the three arrested men were involved in the training of al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and MILF members in bomb-making in Metro Manila. He also confirmed initial intelligence reports that ASG members were in the capital to stage bomb attacks.

Two others were wounded in the raid—Mohammad Utto’s wife, Sophia Dalan, who was believed to be an MILF member herself, and one Baguio Embada. The two were hospitalized. It was unclear if they were also going to be detained.

Five other suspected terrorists fled the

BOMBING/ A18

Ebdane loses cool on first day at DND

By Dona Pazzibugan

NEWLY INSTALLED DEFENSE SECRETary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. lost his temper yesterday at his first press briefing, where he indicated that he could work around an existing agreement that bars soldiers from election duties.

According to Ebdane, the memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed by the Department of National Defense and the Commission on Elections last Oct. 12 was “flexible,” and soldiers may be tapped to transport ballots, election results and other paraphernalia for the midterm elections in May.

The MOA, an initiative of then Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr., was drawn up as a result of the “Hello Garci”

EBDANE/ A19

Khalifa held office with Libyan in Malate

By Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—JAMAL KHALIFA MAINtained an office on San Marcelino Street in Malate, Manila, not far from the Josefa Apartments where Ramzi Yousef allegedly plotted to kill Pope John Paul II in 1982.

Little did people close to Khalifa know that his brother-in-law, Osama bin Laden, would become infamous for the Sept. 11, 2001, bombings in the United States.

The two-story office of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IRRO) was run by Khalifa and a Libyan whose Tripoli-based private group offered study tour grants to Libya.

Khalifa’s marriage to a Filipino Muslim woman boosted his Mindanao connections through which the IIRO established organizational partnerships to strengthen the Islamic da’wah (propagation), especially among converts to Islam in many parts of the country.

The IRRO funded the construction of orphanages in Awang, Crossing Simuay in Maguindanao and of Islamic cultural centers in Cotabato and Zamboanga City.

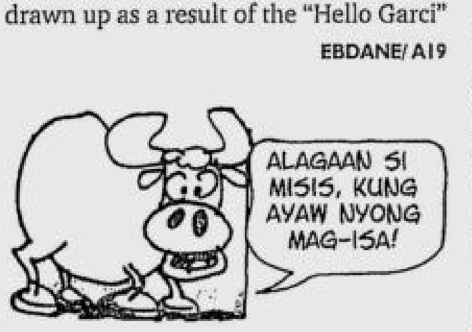
The propagation program for the “orphans of war” also covered short-course da’wah training for Islamic teachers.

Khalifa was killed in Madagascar on Tuesday in what appeared to be a burglary, his brother Malek said.

Malek said 25 to 30 gunmen broke into his brother’s house “while he was sleeping” and killed him. The Al-Arabiya satellite TV channel said Khalifa was staying at a precious stones mine he owned when he was killed.

In an interview with a professor of the Mindanao State University in February 2006, published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer on Jan. 22, Khadaffy Janjalani, head of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group, said that his

KHALIFA/ A18


ALAGAAN SI MISIS, KUNG AYAW NYONG MAG-ISA!

Aging Japanese men learn to love wives

TOKYO—MITSUTOSHI FUKATSU HAS BEEN with his wife for three decades, but their lives have grown apart. As a busy station master in central Japan, he returned home only to eat, bathe and sleep.

Now with retirement looming, the 56-year-old wants to get to know his wife better. He's helping with chores, calls his wife by her name Setsuko—instead of just grunting—and he recently learned a new phrase: "I love you."

Fukatsu is one of a small but growing group of men who took part in Japan's second annual "Beloved Wives Day" on Wednesday in hopes of salvaging their marriages by doing something unusual—paying attention to their wives.

AGING/ A18

From Gore to DiCaprio, ‘carbon neutral’ is the rage

PARIS—IT’S A TREND THAT counts Leonardo DiCaprio, London cabs and Al Gore among its followers—making life “carbon neutral” by tree-planting and other environmentally friendly efforts to curb emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide.

The theme is a hot one as scientists in Paris this week prepare to issue a major report on global warming, but critics say the movement is counterproductive, even a scam.

The practicalities of “offsetting” carbon dioxide emitted when flying, driving cars, or even getting married are increasingly simple.

A growing array of companies is offering to calculate how much carbon dioxide such activities give off and how much money should be given to projects that, in theory at least, will reduce emissions by an equivalent amount somewhere else in the world. It can be done in minutes online, paid for by credit card.

Opponents of the movement, however, say offsetting gives people the mistaken impression that

FROM GORE/ A4

RAIDERS AT SEA: The team of Marines and policemen return to base with three suspected Moro militants, allegedly members of an MILF breakaway group, after they raided the suspects’ hideout in Barangay Sta. Ana, Taytay, Rizal. Also recovered from the scene were weapons and bomb-making materials and explosives. RAFFY LERMA

What makes public school kids excel in school

By Queena N. Lee-Chua

(First of two parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

LAST YEAR, THE MOST OUTSTANDing student in my college algebra class at the Ateneo de Manila University did not come from an exclusive private school or a Chinese-Filipino institution.

Von Karlo Sinence, a scholar, graduated from Parang High School, a public school in Marikina City.

Two years ago, in my introductory psychology class, Francis Alcausin was one of a handful of students who received an A on his term paper.

Francis, also a scholar, graduated from Marikina Science High School, again a public school.

True, Von and Francis had teachers who motivated them. Von in particular says that he owes a debt of gratitude to his freshman teacher, Alden Madrigalejo, for training him in math. But many of their classmates did not perform as well as they did.

What is the secret of their success? The answer is family.

Education, it is said, begins at home. Many Filipino families view education as the key to a brighter future. Students in the private schools, with adequate resources and well-trained teachers, may be said to have an academic edge.

However, in the past few years, I have happily observed that several children from low-income families manage not only to stay in school but

WHAT/ A10

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Second FrontPage

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Central Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms becoming frequent rains over Eastern Visayas. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/02/01/07 SOURCE PAGASA

4 incumbents shoo-in for UNO

By Tj Burgonio

WHILE IT APPEARS THEY HAD BEEN LEFT OUT, Senate President Manuel Villar Jr., Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and Senators Ralph Recto and Joker Arroyo are shoo-ins for the United Opposition-led coalition senatorial slate.

The coalition has reserved the four remaining slots for the four members of the Senate's Wednesday Group and was merely waiting for their respective party leaders to submit their "final list," officials in the camp of ousted President Joseph Estrada said yesterday.

Within the next few days, the UNO coalition of Estrada's Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino (PMP) and PDP-Laban, Villar's Nacionalista Party and the Liberal Party wing of Sen. Franklin Drilon would announce their complete slate, including the four reelectionist senators, they said.

"It looks like they're a shoo-in. More or less, they're in. I doubt if they're running in the administration ticket," Sen. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito, Estrada's wife, said in an interview.

'They're in'

Sen. Panfilo Lacson confirmed the four would be drafted by the coalition. "I'm telling you, they're in," he told reporters at the Senate Wednesday afternoon, hours after UNO released a partial list of eight candidates.

After months of back-channel talks with the LP and NP, UNO leaders announced Wednesday their eight candidates.

These were Lacson, former Senators Loren Legarda and John Osmeña, Estrada's son San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, lawyer Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III and Representatives Francis Escudero, Alan Peter Cayetano and Benigno Aquino III.

Cayetano belongs to the NP along with Villar and Recto, while Aquino is a member of the LP with Pangilinan.

Rufus Rodriguez, spokesperson of the PMP, said the remaining slots had been reserved for Villar and his three colleagues in the Wednesday Group.

"We have reserved the last four slots for the incumbent senators," Rodriquez said in an interview.

Even Ernesto Maceda, UNO spokesperson, said the coalition was merely waiting for the LP-NP coalition to finalize its list of candidates from a field of six, including the late Sen. Raul Roco's widow, Sonia, and lawyer Adel Tamano.

"What's holding it up is that they're choosing from a field of six candidates," Maceda said in an interview on ABS-CBN News Channel.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada said Wednesday that Senator Arroyo had to seek the blessing of his father, the ousted president, if he wanted to be endorsed by UNO. Arroyo declined to comment on this.

Rodriguez, however, said that if the selection committee, composed of leaders of the different parties, agreed to take in Arroyo, Estrada would pose no objection.

"Erap is a very forgiving man. If he has forgiven Villar, how much more Joker?" Senator Ejercito said, stressing though that Estrada was not part of the selection process.

Arroyo was among the opposition congressmen who initiated impeachment proceedings against then President Estrada in the House in late 2000. Then Speaker Villar played a key role when he hastily transmitted the impeachment complaint to the Senate for the trial of Estrada on corruption charges.

US envoy gets guided Naia tour

By Nikko Dizon

AIRPORT TOUR. US Ambassador Kristie Kenney gets a briefing from control tower supervisor Cesar Cruz during yesterday's visit at the control tower of Ninoy Aquino International Airport. JESS YUSON

NOT VERY MANY GET A GUIDED tour of an international airport and its inner workings, but when you're US Ambassador Kristie Anne Kenney, a visit to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) includes a security and development briefing by Manila airport authority officials.

"I'm very interested because, as you know, the government of the United States takes airports very seriously. We spend a lot of time exchanging views on how we can keep things safe and what we can do," Kenney told reporters.

Kenney took note of the fact that US carriers regularly flew into the Naia, American tourists continued to visit the Philippines, and Americans lived and worked in Manila.

"The Philippines is a great country to visit. We want to be sure the airport has everything it needs and I really appreciate the time the authorities are taking to show me so I can learn about it," Kenney said.

A representative from the US Transportation Security Administration works closely with the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) on airport matters.

"I'm learning about what goes on out here because it's of great interest to all of us. We look at ways we can work together and continue to," Kenney said, adding:

"I think there's nothing better than having a safe, efficient airport as a real hallmark of the Philippines."

Miaa general manager Alfonso Cusi said the visit was initiated from the American ambassador's end.

"She wanted to see for herself and to understand better what airport security was all about," Cusi said in a separate interview.

Cusi stressed that Kenney's visit, which lasted the entire morning yesterday, was not spurred by any security threat on the Philippines, neither did the US ambassador conduct a security review.

In fact, he said, the US Embassy had long requested a briefing for Kenney. She was the first ambassador to ask for an airport briefing in the Miaa's history.

Mercury dips further; 9°C in Baguio

By Norman Bordadora

TEMPERATURES DROPPED further yesterday, setting a new low for the season.

The weather station in Baguio City recorded a new low of 9 Celsius early yesterday, said Nathaniel Cruz, chief of the weather branch of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

In Metro Manila, the Pagasa Science Garden in Quezon City recorded 18.3 Celsius.

Both readings broke the previous season record lows of 9.6 Celsius in Baguio and 18.7 Celsius in Quezon City, recorded last Wednesday. *(Related story on Page A15)*

Cruz said the country should see similar, or even lower, temperatures in the next two or three days.

But the cold weather will not last as the mercury will start climbing soon as the high pressure area affecting the country moves east.

According to Cruz, this phenomenon has the effect of weakening the northeast monsoon that brings the cold air in from the Asian continent.

This means that the cold air coming from Siberia will be replaced by the warm air coming from the Philippine Sea and the Pacific Ocean to the east of the archipelago.

Cruz said that the cold season would have been colder if the air from continental Asia did not have to pass over the waters north of the archipelago to reach the Philippines.

"The atmosphere over the seas causes the cold air to warm up. If there were no seas between Asia and the Philippines, the cold air we now have will be much colder," he said.

Pagasa expects the cold to last until about the second week of February, in time for Valentine's Day when lovers are expected to snuggle—cold weather or not.

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DILG exec tells how sacked officials may get jobs back

By Norman Bordadora

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS DISmissed from the public service after being fired by the Ombudsman still have a chance of getting their old jobs back, an interior department official said yesterday.

Interior Undersecretary for Local Governance Wencelito Andanar told the INQUIRER that all they needed to do was secure a temporary restraining order (TRO) from the Court of Appeals and the ousted officials may not only get their elective posts back, they could also run in the coming elections. *(See related story in Metro, Page A22.)*

"If they win in the elections, they are automatically cleared of the administrative sanctions. It means their constituents had absolved them of their administrative liabilities," said Andanar, a lawyer.

"But the temporary restraining order is crucial. They can only run for public office when they have a TRO from the CA on their dismissal order," he said.

The Ombudsman in early January ordered the Department of Interior and Local Government to dismiss Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas, Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad and Jaen, Nueva Ecija, Mayor Antonio Esquivel after they were found guilty of various forms of misconduct.

The Ombudsman also barred the officials from ever working in the government again as well as being elected to office.

"This is what I have been telling Mayor Peewee. They should first get a temporary restraining order from the Court of Appeals. I don't know why they seem to be having difficulty getting a TRO," Andanar said.

He said the DILG thumbed down Trinidad's request to be re-installed, along with the Pasay City vice mayor and eight councilors who were also dismissed, as their preventive suspensions expired on Jan. 31.

"Yes, the suspensions have lapsed but this has been overtaken by their dismissal by the Ombudsman which may not be final but is executory even pending their appeal," Andanar said.

Trinidad believed otherwise, saying that since his dismissal was on appeal in the Court of Appeals, it wasn't final and therefore should not be implemented.

"If they can get a TRO from the CA, I will personally see to it that they are re-installed," Andanar said.

Bayan bucks 'communist' tag

TAKING EXCEPTION TO BEING ALLEGEDLY called a communist front organization by President Macapagal-Arroyo, the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) said it would not cooperate with any official investigation into political killings.

"Her [the President's] pronouncement shows the government's official attitude towards legal activist organizations. She herself has encouraged the killings of activists just by referring to them as communist fronts," said Bayan secretary general Renato M. Reyes, Jr.

The President the other day told the diplomatic corps at a Malacañang reception that there might be a need for another investigation into political killings, one that may possibly include members of the international community.

The Malacañang-appointed Melo Commision that investigated the killings submitted a report this week that blamed majority of the killings on soldiers.

Under increasing pressure to stop the killings that have left hundreds dead since 2001, the President told foreign diplomats that communist rebels and some soldiers have both been involved in the assassinations. But she defended the military against charges of human rights violations.

In her speech, Ms Arroyo said there was a discrepancy in the number of victims reported by the PNP and "communist front organizations," which Bayan took to refer to itself and its allied human rights group, Karapatan.

However, the President in her speech did not identify any groups by name.

Reyes said that out of the more than 800 casualties recorded by Karapatan, 365 were from organizations under the Bayan alliance.

He said the President's "brazen use of the term communist fronts" supported Bayan's contention that there was a government policy and programs "that consider legal organizations as communist organizations and therefore legitimate targets of military operations."

With the President's supposed remarks against their organizations, Reyes said she may no longer expect any cooperation from them

Norman Bordadora

Medical furlough for Gringo likely

By Tarra Quismundo

AS HIS REQUEST TO HAVE A DOCTOR LOOK at his injured leg has not been opposed, jailed former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan may be assured of a medical furlough to have his leg examined this weekend, his lawyer and a state prosecutor said yesterday.

While Makati Judge Oscar Pimentel has yet to rule on Honasan's request for a checkup of his leg, his lawyer Daniel Gutierrez and State Prosecutor Juan Navera both said yesterday it appeared Honasan's chances were good of being allowed to go to a hospital to have his badly bruised left leg looked at.

"Most probably he will be brought to the hospital... The judge even said he could be brought to the hospital once he complains, even without his order," said Gutierrez when reached by phone yesterday.

For the prosecution's part, Navera said: "When Honasan asked for a medical checkup, we saw that there was no reason to oppose it. During the ocular inspection [of Fort Sto. Domingo in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, where Honasan is being held], I personally saw that the lower part of his left leg was reddish violet."

'Flight risk'

Since Honasan left it to the prosecution to decide when he could leave detention, Navera said the former senator may likely have his medical checkup on the justice department's recommended date, time and location: Feb. 3, between 8 a.m. and noon, at Asian Hospital in Muntinlupa City.

If allowed by the court, Honasan's medical furlough will take place four days before his court-granted leave to personally file his certificate of candidacy (COC) for senator on Feb. 7 at the Commission on Elections main office in Intramuros, Manila.

"It was a matter of balancing the security with the humanitarian considerations," said Navera, who had opposed Honasan's request to personally file his COC at the Comelec in Intramuros, calling him a "flight risk."

Honasan had asked Pimentel for permission to have his leg examined when the court inspected the former senator's detention quarters on Jan. 26, a request later formalized by Honasan's lawyer who filed a pleading in court seeking the furlough.

The former Army colonel's left leg was injured during his attempt to evade police out to arrest him before dawn of Nov. 15 at a Quezon City townhouse. He had reportedly jumped out of a window and from roof to roof. Another report had him jumping over a wall, still another made by another former senator had him jumping out of his running vehicle while police were chasing him.

Left-Right plot

He had been the object of a nationwide manhunt for his alleged leadership role in the 2003 Oakwood mutiny in Makati City. He was also purportedly involved in the Left-Right plot to overthrow the Arroyo administration on Feb. 25, 2006.

Gutierrez said Honasan's leg had not been examined since he was brought to Fort Sto. Domingo, a Philippine National Police Special Action Force facility that is highly secure and was the place of detention for ousted President Joseph Estrada and Moro rebel leader Nur Misuari at some point during their respective trials.

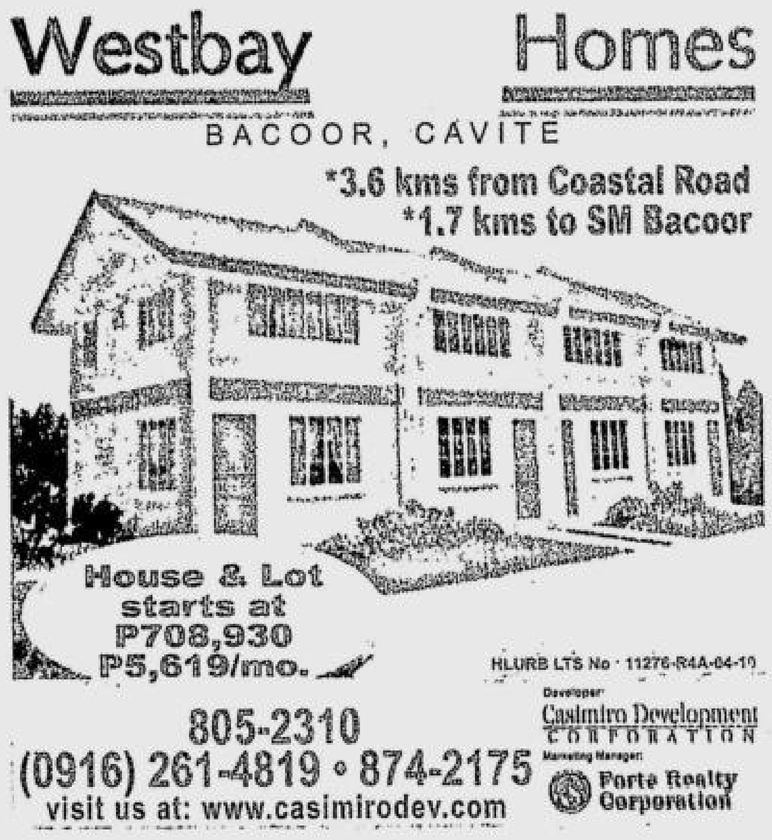
He said Fort Sto. Domingo lacked the medical facilities to properly treat Honasan's leg and that only one nurse checked on his condition from time to time.

Be neutral, foreigners warned

THE COMMISSION on Elections yesterday warned foreigners coming to the country to observe the midterm elections on May 14 not to meddle in local politics and stay neutral and non-partisan.

Among the groups sure to arrive to observe the polls is the Association of Southeast Asian election authorities, according to Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr.

The deadline for the filing of application of foreign observers is on April 1, according to Comelec Resolution No. 7902.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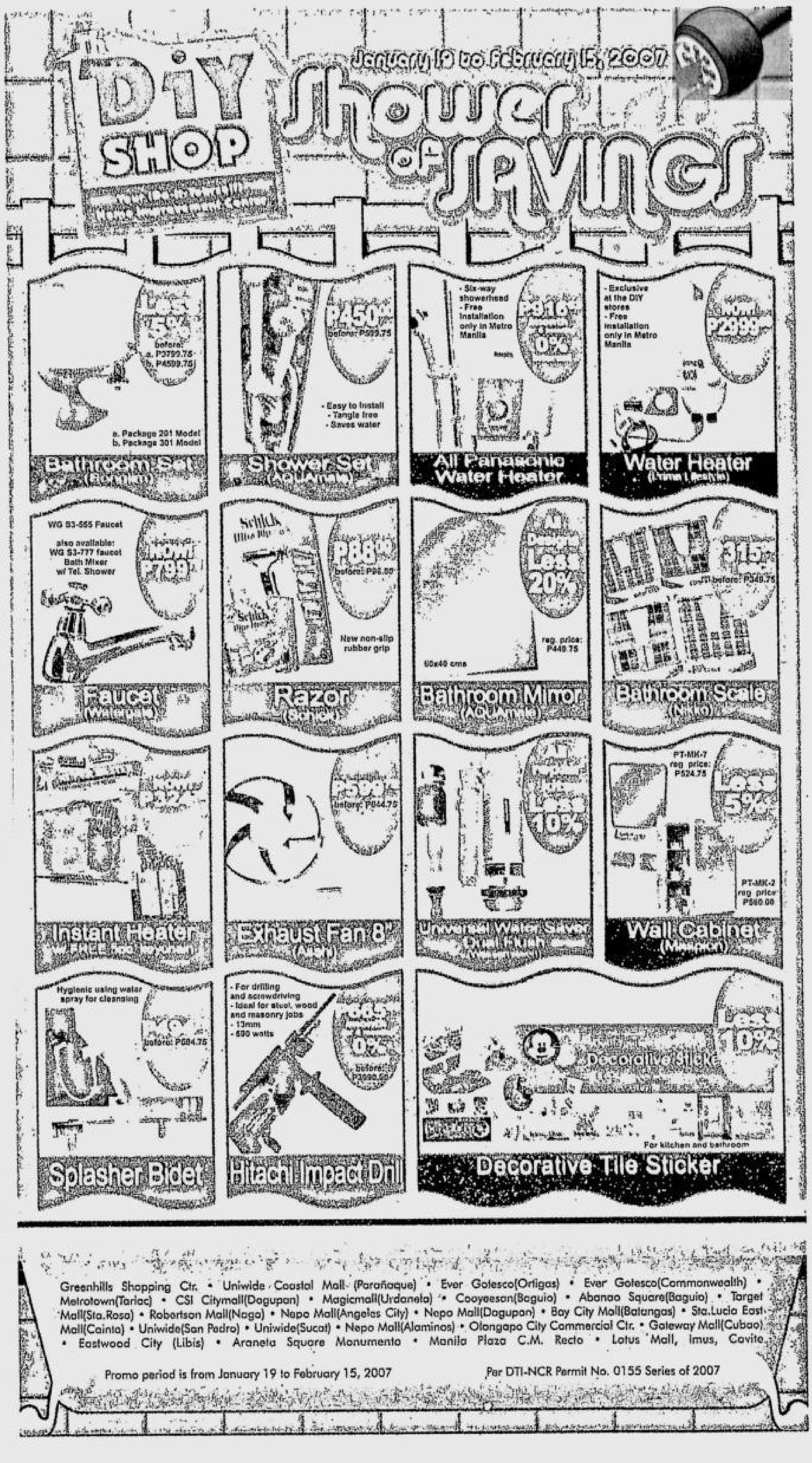
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Lyn Ching – Pascual, 34
Smart and sassy mom

Always on the go, Lyn makes sure that she never runs out of quality time for her daughter and husband Jappy. Lyn wants to do things fast under a pretty much organized schedule. In fact, her fast-paced lifestyle is the same reason that brought her closer to Marie France's Ultrashape. She says, "With Ultrashape, all I have to do is walk in, lie down for about an hour while undergoing my treatment and drive my way back to work again. I can even take phone calls or read some magazines even while I'm at it. The best part was, I could feel my tummy flatten only after a few weeks! A friend of mine who also tried Ultrashape immediately lost 2 inches in just one month! Ultrashape is not just fast and easy, it delivers excellent results as well!"

Cristina Gonzalez – Romualdez, 42
Posh and classic mom

Despite the busy nature of her catering business, Cristina prefers spending most of her quality time in Tacloban where time moves slowly. It is where she best personifies calm and domesticity while still donning a classy, graceful image.

She states, "I love my life in the province. Strolling along the beach, wearing simple dresses and enjoying the serenity of the place with my family. It strips me off the frills and stresses from work and city life. If I overindulge in good food because of the relaxing environment, all I have to do is to have my tummy flattened by Ultrashape. Just like my preference for comfort, Ultrashape requires no drastic surgeries and harmful side-effects. It doesn't require complicated diets and it leaves no ugly scars. It's a very convenient, simple and risk-free method to re-sculpt the body by melting away loose tummy fat that makes one look and feel older and less attractive."

Dawn Zulueta–Lagdameo, 37
Glam and modern mom

Dawn is no doubt devoted and hands-on with her son Jacobo. But during her spare time, she indulges on her penchant for stylish shoes, fashionable clothes, costume parties and her ipod music collection. Her chic and cosmopolitan taste with just about everything makes her an exciting, contemporary mom. For Dawn, it's always an advantage to be up-to-date.

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IN THE KNOW

Carbon offsets a self-imposed tax

CARBON OFFSETTING IS A PRACTICE THAT dates back about a dozen years and includes among its advocates former US Vice President Al Gore, maker of the Oscar-nominated global warming documentary "An Inconvenient Truth."

The practice entails compensating for one's own unavoidable carbon dioxide or CO_2 pollution by investing in projects elsewhere that reduce or eliminate those emissions.

Put simply, carbon offsets are a form of self-imposed tax that more green-living people are contemplating, aware that their lifestyle inflicts an environmental cost that is simply not reflected in the price of fossil fuels.

Corporations and individuals who want to ease carbon guilt—or flourish green credentials—may also buy the offset through an intermediary.

Some intermediaries deal with investments in foreign mega-projects, such as biogas initiatives in China aimed at weaning the world's most populous country from its dependence on coal.

Other carbon-offsetting schemes, though, are smaller, local and targeted at the individual.

For example, the CarbonNeutral Company in Britain calculates that driving a car with an engine of between 1.4 and 2.0 liters for around 10,000 kilometers a year generates around two tons of CO_2. With a purchase of just $29.60, the firm says, you can help plant trees in a British forest that will soak up these emissions—in effect, making your driving a zero-emission activity.

The broadening range of carbon-offsetting innovations is triggering debate about the quality of some schemes.

Earlier this month, the British government launched a consultation about standards and a code of practice as a safeguard against rip-offs that could badly damage a promising activity.

Alister Scott, spokesperson for the University of Sussex Energy Group, an independent group researching energy projects, said offsets were "well-intentioned" but variable in their effect.

The best schemes are those that build capacity—in other words, they generate further emission reduction in their own right.

AFP

CALLANG General Hospital
(TERTIARY LEVEL)
Judge Taguinod St., Centro East, Santiago City (078) 682-8189 682-8480 682-2320 loc. 15
Direct Line: Dr. Gerardo T. Lingan - St. James Multi-Diagnostic Center (078) 682-4388

Fourteen Years of Dedicated Service to the Filipino

Standing from left: Dr. Emmanuel Salamanca, Dr. Gerardo Lingan, Dr. Dominic Fuerte, Dr. Stephen Callang-*Hospital Director*, Dr. Glenn Butuyan. *Sitting from left:* Dr. Ceferina Kiat, Dr. Olivia Domingo, Dr. Myrna Costales

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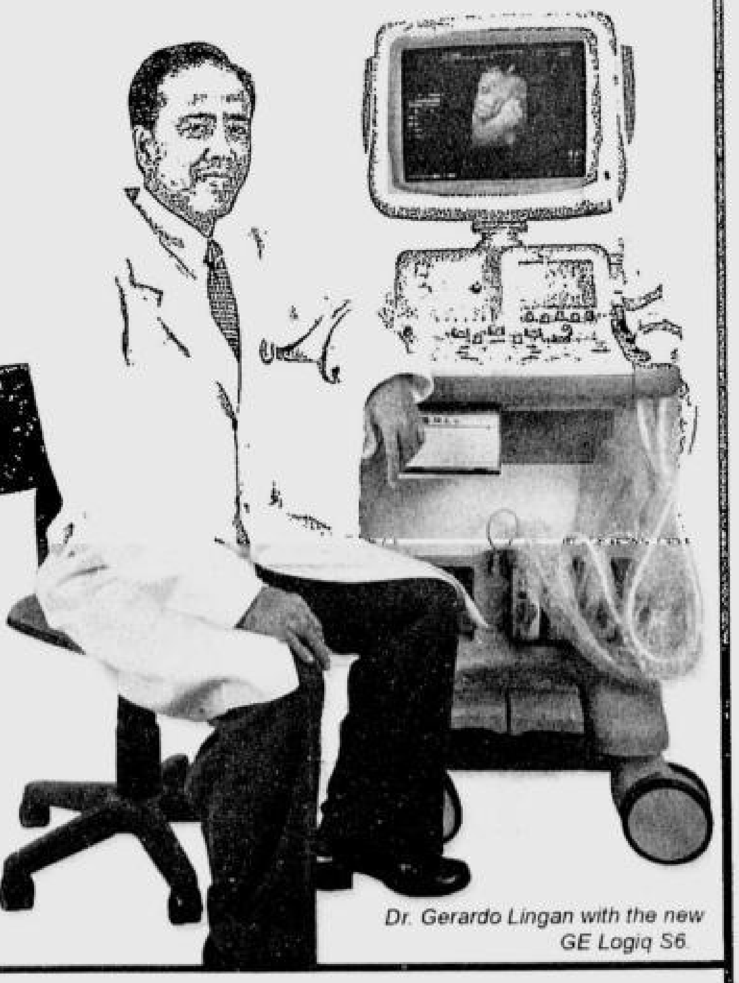

Dr. Gerardo Lingan with the new GE Logiq S6.

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From Gore ...

From page A1

they can keep on polluting or that such individual efforts can solve global warming, when much more fundamental change is needed.

They also warn that offsetting companies lack oversight and transparency, and that the environment would be better served by people reducing their own pollution and demanding that governments end the use of carbon-producing fossil fuels.

The carbon neutral trend "tries to make money from tapping into consumers' guilt," said Jutta Kill of SinksWatch, an environmental group that monitors such projects.

"It's worse than doing nothing . . . Those who are in a role-model function like Al Gore do not do the movement for effective action on climate change a favor by promoting carbon offsets in the way he does."

Green is good business

But green business can be good business, especially when a trend is so hot.

The New Oxford American Dictionary declared "carbon neutral" its "word of the year for 2006," for inclusion in its 2007 edition.

The British firm Radio Taxis Group, which runs a fleet of 3,000 iconic black London cabs and other vehicles, declared itself the world's first "carbon neutral" taxi company in 2005. It said it would offset emissions by investing in renewable energy projects in Sri Lanka and Bulgaria and forests in Britain and Germany for a cost of about $195,000 at today's rates.

Since then, the company says it has won new contracts worth $3.9 million from clients attracted by its green credentials.

"The cabs still have an impact on the environment," said Michelle Nunan, head of marketing. But "it's the best that you can do at the moment as far as taxis are concerned."

Like littering in public

Climat Mundi's online "CO_2 calculator" works out that a round-trip Paris to London flight for one person in economy class produces 0.2 tons of carbon dioxide. It says the best thing is to take the train but if flying is unavoidable, the fledgling French company suggests contributing $5.31 to two projects it funds.

One project provides Eritrea with stoves that burn less wood. The other project helps maintain a plant near Sydney, Australia, that captures methane—another greenhouse gas—from rotting trash at an adjacent landfill and burns it to power electricity-producing turbines.

Eric Parent, an engineer who quit a steady job in waste management to start up Climat Mundi last June, says polluting without offsetting could become as frowned-upon socially as littering in public.

"It remains socially very acceptable to vacation on the other side of the world or to travel for a weekend to another country in Europe on a low-cost airline," Parent said in a telephone interview.

"Growing awareness of global warming and the fact that we, as individuals, can now compensate for our emissions—which wasn't the case four to five years ago . . . will, in my opinion, make traveling without compensating far less acceptable."

For newlyweds, or their guests, Climat Mundi offers a $230 "Just Married" pack to compensate for the nine tons of carbon dioxide that it calculates are given off by a wedding bash for 150 people and honeymoon trip—accounting for travel, heating or other eco-unfriendly activity.

1,100 tons of CO_2

The French government is funding Climat Mundi's Eritrean stove project to compensate for this week's meeting in Paris on climate change. Bringing together some 500 people from all over the world for the conference is expected to produce some 1,100 tons of carbon dioxide.

To compensate will require some 360 stoves that burn half as much wood and pollute less than traditional Eritrean stoves, Parent said.

Organizers of the 2006 World Cup in Germany said they would invest environmentally to offset the estimated 100,000 tons of carbon emissions caused mostly by car usage during the June 9-July 9 soccer extravaganza. Fans were also encouraged to take public transport and only recyclable drink cups were used in stadiums.

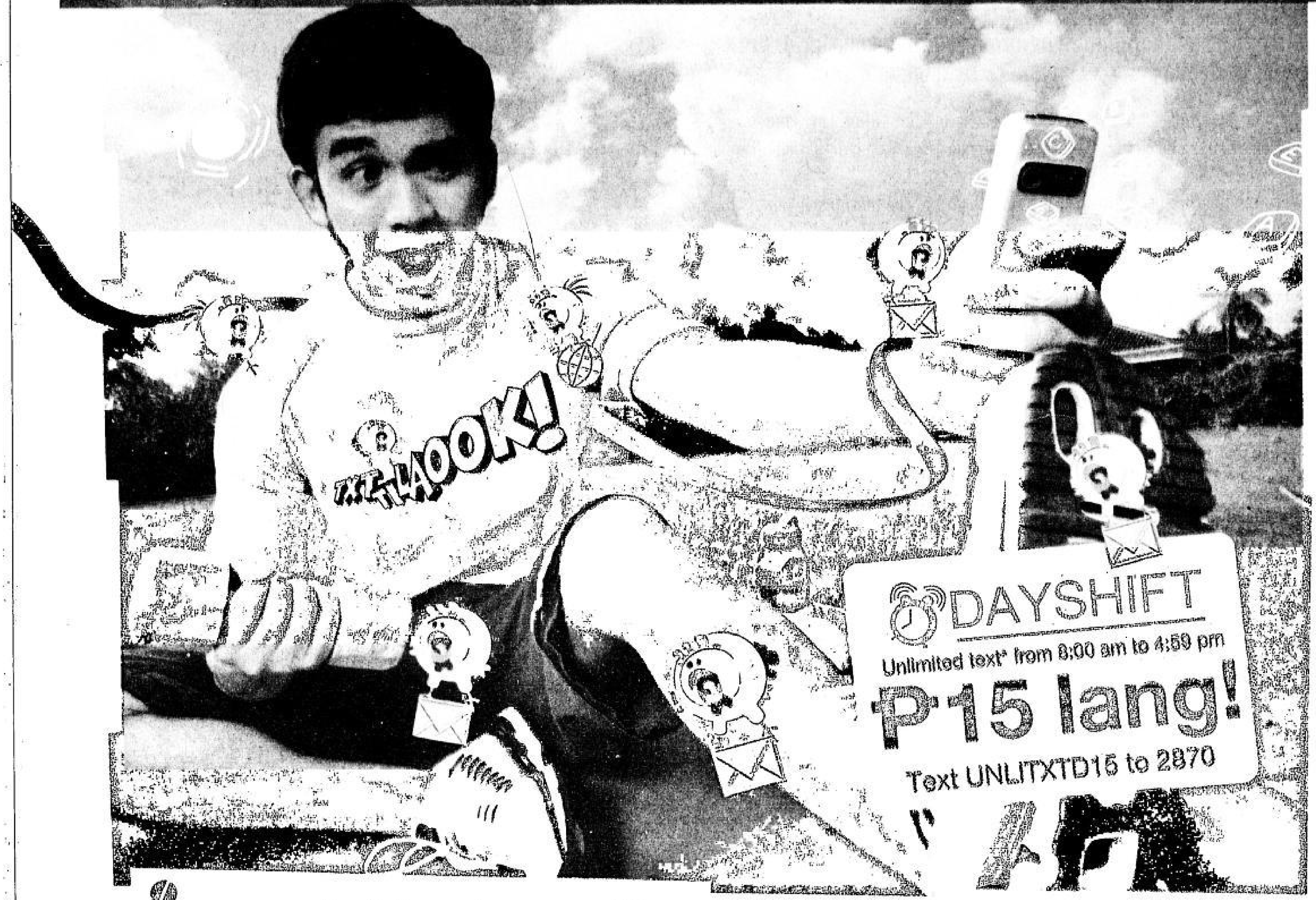
DiCaprio foundation

DiCaprio in the past offset his carbon emission through organizations that plant trees and is "looking at various options" for 2007, according to Chuck Castleberry of the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, which the "Titanic" star started in 1998 to promote environmental awareness.

The actor switched recently to a Honda Accord hybrid car and has solar panels on his Los Angeles home.

AP

"Gusto namin ng sulit na KULITXTAN umaga man o gabi!"



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End the Violence! Stop Agrarian-Related Killings in Negros Occidental

PGMA must act now to *install* the CLOA holders!

Solidarity statement for the 122 agrarian reform beneficiaries in 144 hectares of Hacienda Velez-Malaga in La Castellana, Negros Occidental

WE CONDEMN in the strongest and most categorical terms the killing last January 25 of Pepito Santillan Sr., 61, a farmer-beneficiary of Hacienda Velez-Malaga in Barangay Robles, La Castellana, Negros Occidental.

Santillan was treacherously killed in the early hours of the morning by an assassin, identified by a witness as a hired goon of hacienda owner Roberto J. Cuenca.

Farmer-beneficiaries of Hacienda Velez-Malaga tear the MOU proposed by Cuenca to DAR as they seek justice for slain CLOA holder Pepito Santillan in press conference.

Santillan is the ninth member of Task Force Mapalad to have died in agrarian-related violence in Negros Occidental since 2001. Nobody has been convicted to date for the murders.

The death of Santillan and the others before him is a grim reminder of the continuing failure of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to assert its exclusive jurisdiction over agrarian reform matters and to resolve agrarian disputes in contentious landholdings.

It is also a stark testimony to the continuing indifference of the Arroyo administration to agrarian-related killings, especially in Negros Occidental, and its failure to address the systemic problems of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

In a recent pastoral letter, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines had noted this systemic defect in CARP, aggravated by the government's lack of vigor in CARP implementation, indicating landlord class interests outweighing those of the poor.

This systemic defect has spawened extra-judicial killings of farmers. Task Force Mapalad, always adhering to the democratic process, has provided evidence to the Melo Commission linking the extra-judicial killings to anti-CARP landowners. Now the President talks only of the Commission's Report in terms of "leftist-military" issues and refuses to disclose its contents to the public.

We condemn the atmosphere of terror in Hacienda Velez-Malaga as a result of Cuenca's continuing hold over the 144 hectares already awarded to the 122 farmer-beneficiaries as far back as 2002.

It is unfortunate that DAR Secretary Nasser Pangandaman chose to put the blame on the farmer-beneficiaries and Task Force Mapalad when it is he who should take the full responsibility.

The Arroyo government by its politics-driven governance on agrarian reform and Pangandaman by his actions had pushed the farmer-beneficiaries to the limit of their tolerance and endurance, leaving them no option but to install themselves in the land they own.

WE DECLARE THAT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES OBTAINING IN HACIENDA VELEZ-MALAGA, THE FARMER-BENEFICIARIES FELT THE THREAT TO THEIR RIGHT TO LAND AND WERE PUT IN A DEPSPERATE POSITION **TO TAKE THE OPTION OF SELF-INSTALLATION.**

WE UNEQUIVOCALLY SUPPORT THEIR RIGHT TO THEIR LAND.

THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION MUST RECOGNIZE AND UPHOLD THIS RIGHT.

THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION SHOULD EXTEND ALL SUPPORT TO THE INSTALLATION OF THE FARMER-BENEFICIARIES.

WE ASK PRESIDENT ARROYO TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. ORDER THE IMMEDIATE INSTALLATION OF THE CLOA HOLDERS OF HACIENDA VELEZ-MALAGA, AS WELL AS THE CLOA HOLDERS IN OTHER HACIENDAS
2. MOBILIZE POLICE AND MILITARY FORCES TO ASSIST IN THE INSTALLATION AND TO PROTECT THE FARMERS IN THE RIGHTFUL OCCUPATION AND TILLING OF THEIR LAND.
3. ORDER THE FILING OF CHARGES AGAINST ROBERTO J. CUENCA FOR CARP OBSTRUCTION AND FOR CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE FARMER-BENEFICIARIES
4. ORDER IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF THE KILLER OF PEPITO SANTILLAN SR. AND THE OTHER PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE IN HACIENDA VELEZ-MALAGA.
5. MOBILIZE THE POWERS OF GOVERNMENT TO FINALLY ADDRESS THE SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM AND CERTIFY THE BILL THAT INSTITUTE REFORMS AND EXTENDS AND FULLY FUNDS IT BEYOND 2008.

THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND RIGHT IS NOT ONLY THE STRUGGLE OF THE FARMERS BUT OF THE FLLIPINO PEOPLE IN THEIR DREAM OF ATTAINING THE GOALS OF PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS THAT LED TO JANUARY 25 INCIDENT

Case Background

1. *Aug. 22, 1996.* Roberto J. Cuenca receives notice of CARP coverage of the 446-hectare hacienda. Sept. 24, he files motion for annulment of coverage before RTC Branch 63, La Carlota City.
2. *Sept. 21, 1999.* Another Cuenca property (81.6 hectares in Barangay Haguinit, La Carlota City) placed under CARP coverage. Cuenca also files petition for annulment of coverage before RTC Branch 63.
3. *Oct. 23, 2001.* Land Bank issues memorandum of valuation for 144 hectares. Dec. 18, Cuenca files motion for injunction against Land Bank valuation. RTC issues injuncton on Jan. 4, 2002. However, DAR proceeds with the CARP process based on R.A. 6657 provisions that agrarian issues are under exclusive jurisdiction of DAR and no court can issue an injunction against CARP.
4. *April 30, 2002.* DAR issues CLOA covering 144 hectares to 122 FBs, but it hesistates to install them because of the court injunction. On Oct. 22, the FBs occupy 10 hectares of the awarded land to prevent Cuenca from cultivating and replanting it.
5. *Dec. 5 2002.* RTC Branch 63 issues injunction vs. CARP coverage of the hacienda and orders the cancellation of CLOA.
6. *May 16, 2003.* Register of Deeds (ROD) in Negros Occidental cancels CLOA despite a pending motion for reconsideration by DAR. (Note: When the RTC later nullifies its order cancelling the CLOA, the ROD refuses to restore the CLOA on ground that Cuenca has pending motion for reconsideration.)
7. *Sept. 23, 2004.* Supreme Court Third Division, in its decision on the case of Cuenca's property in La Carlota City, declares:

   "All controversies on the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), even though they raise questions that are also legal or constitutional in nature. All doubts should be resolved in favor of the DAR, since the law has granted it special and original authority to hear and adjudicate agrarian matters." (*DAR vs. Roberto Cuenca and Hon. Alfonso B. Combong Jr.*)

   Accordingly, the High Court VOIDS the injunction order of RTC Branch 63 and DISMISSES the complaint of Cuenca. Cuenca files motion for reconsideration, but the motion is dismissed.
8. *March 29, 2005.* The High Court records its Sept. 23, 2004 decision n the Entries of Judgment. The decision becomes final and executory.
9. Consequently, on *Dec. 15, 2005*, RTC Branch 63 dismisses Cuenca's annulment case and sets aside all its previous decisions, including the issuance of injunction and the cancellation of CLOA. Cuenca files a motion for reconsideration, but the RTC dismisses the motion on June 9, 2006. Cuenca goes to the Appeals Court. DAR, meanwhile, asks the ROD to restore the "erroneously cancelled" CLOA, but the ROD, which cancelled the CLOA despite a pending motion for reconsideration from DAR, refuses on ground of Cuenca's pending appeal.
10. Sept. 20, 2006. Pangandaman issues Special Order No. 706 directing DAR Region 6 Director Alexis Arsenal "to utilize, and avail of, any and all means necessary to effect the immediate resumption of the implementation [of CARP in Malaga] until the identified farmer-beneficiaries have been finally installed."
11. *Oct. 7, 2006.* Dialogue between DAR, TFM, and Senior Supt. Rosendo Franco, PNP provincial director, of Negros Occidental, for assistance in the installation. It was agreed that after a police search in the hacienda, installation of the FBs would ensue. A month later, the search had not been conducted.
12. *Nov. 21, 2006.* DAR and TFM meeting with PNP Deputy Director General Avelino Razon in Camp Crame. Razon calls up Franco and instructs him to take appropriate actions to assist the ARBs.
13. *Nov. 23, 2006.* PNP Director for Operations Wilfredo V. Garcia issues a memorandum to PNP Director for Region 6 enjoining police action in the contentious haciendas, including assistance to the long-delayed installation of ARBs in Hacienda Velez-Malaga.
14. Nov. 30, 2006. Stephen Leonidas, provincial agrarian reform officer (PARO) of DAR Negros Occidental, writes a letter to Cuenca asking him "to cease and desist from further cultivating the landholding."

Immediate Events

15. *Dec. 7, 2006.* Scheduled installation. DAR national staff are in Negros for the installation. Senior Supt. Franco begs to be excused, saying he has a very important matter to attend to. He says he has instructed his men to assist. To the dismay of DAR personnel and ARBs, the head of PNP-Provincial Mobile Group (PMG) which is supposed to accompany them is nowhere to be found. The installation team proceeds to La Castellana. The police chief, Senior Insp. Placido Composa, is surprised when informed that there is an installation in Hacienda Velez-Malaga. TFM receives information that Pangandaman has canceled the installation after receiving a call from Rep. Iggy Arroyo. That evening, Pangandaman asks for a meeting with TFM, which takes place at Shangri-la Hotel. He asks to be given time, saying he would talk to Cuenca.

26. *Dec. 14, 2006.* TFM meeting with Pangandaman. He informs TFM that Cuenca is offering another portion of the hacienda in lieu of the 144 hectares. TFM says it is a bogus offer. It had been offered in Dec. 2005, but when Undersecrtary Nieto was set to install the ARBs, as was agreed, he received word that the area had been barricaded by Cuenca's guards and farm workers. Still, Pangandaman asks that he be given a chance to visit the offered area.
27. *Dec. 20, 2006.* Members of TFM storm the office of Pangandaman after he reneges on his promise to visit the hacienda. The farmers are concerned that delay in installation will again embolden Cuenca to cultivate the awarded land. That same day, DAR issues an order, signed by Nieto, for Cuenca to stop cultivating the 144 hectares. Pangandaman also promises to send Nieto the visit the hacienda on Dec. 27.
28. *Dec. 27, 2006.* Nieto's visit cancelled. Cuenca sends word that Nieto will not be allowed to enter the hacienda. He wants Pangandaman himself to come. Pangandaman schedules his visit on Jan. 10.
29. *Jan. 9, 2007.* Around 8:30 p.m., members of the police-supervised Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO), maintained by Cuenca in the hacienda, enter the house of Nida Salmorin, an ARB. They make search but find nothing.
30. *Jan. 10, 2007.* Pangandaman does not show up. Instead, ARBs notice that the hacienda guards and the CVO armed men are put on alert and make regular patrols. The hacienda farm workers are also mobilized.

32. *Jan 19, 2007.* TFM obtains a copy of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Cuenca and Pangandaman providing for cancellation of the ARB's CLOA, the eviction of ARBs from the 10 hectares, and the awarding of hacienda land to Cuenca's farm workers.
33. *Jan. 24, 2007.* ARBs, alarmed by Pangandaman's actions, decide to install themselves in a vacant lot beside the occupied 10 hectares. Hacienda guards and goons attack. Two ARBs are wounded.
34. Jan. 25, 2007. Around 2 a.m., Pepito Santillan is assassinated in front of his house.

Individuals

Archbishop Ramon C. Argueles, D.D., Lipa City • **Archbishop Antonio J. Ledesma**, SJ, D.D., Cagayan de Oro City • **Atty. Christian Monsod**, former Comelec Chairman • **Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Barraquel**, Akbayan Party List • **Ms. Leah Navarro**, Black and White Movement • **Jose Noel Olano**, Executive Director, PARFUND • **Ms. Karen Tañada**, Executive Director, GZO-PI • **Ronald Llamas**. President, AKBAYAN Party List • **Conrado Navarro**, Exective Director, Agrarian Justice Fund, Inc. (AJF) • **Edward M. Gerlock**, Executive Director, COSE, Inc. • **Mahar Mangahas**, Board of Trustee, PARFUND • **Pastor Emmanuel Alano**, ARA-Negros • **Socrates Vanzuela**, National Coordinator, PAKISAMA • **Ramon Casiple**, Executive Director, Institute of Political and Electoral Reforms (IPER) • **Luz Malibiran**, CO, Multiversity • **Joel Rocamora**, Executive Director, Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) • **Rep. Henedina Abad**, Lone District, Batanes • **Rep. Mario Aguja**, Anak Mindanao (AMIN) Party List • **Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales**, Akbayan Party List • **Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III**, 4th District, Quezon • **Rep. Mujiv S. Hataman**, Anak Mindanao (AMIN) Party List • **Rep. Joel Villanueva**, SIBAK Party List

ORGANIZATIONS: Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (SALIGAN) • Aktibong Nagsusulong ng Alternatibong Kultura, Inc. (ANAK-TEATRO) • Samahang 53 Ektarya ng Macabud • Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK) • KAISAHAN tungo sa Kaunlaran ng Kanayunan at Repormang Pansakahan • People's Campaign for Agrarian Reform Network (AR-Now!) • Management and Organizational Development for Empowerment (MODE) • Youth Organizations United Toward Humanism and Social Change (YOUTHS) • BALAOD- Mindanao • Center for Agrarian Reform Empowerment and Transportation (CARET) • Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Samahan sa Kanayunan (PKSK) • Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA) • MAKABAYAN-Pilipinas • Philippine Network of Rural Development Institute (PhilNet- RDI) • Centro Saka, Inc. (CSI) • PARAGOS- Pilipinas • Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA) • Philippine Ecumenical Action for Community Empowerment (PEACE) • People's Alternative Studies Center for Research and Education on Social Development (PASCRES) • Pandayan para sa Sosyalistang Pilipinas (PANDAYAN) • Coaliton of Services for the Elderly (COSE, Inc.) • Coalition of Older Persons Association of the Philippines (COPAP) • Agrarian Reform Advocates of Negros (ARA-Negros) • AKBAYAN-Negros • Lakas ng Kababaihang Magbubukid sa Kanayayunan (LAKAMBINI) • Katipunan ng mga Samahan ng Maralitang Mamamayan sa Kanayunan (KASAMA-KA) • Bukidnon Farmers Agrarian Reform Alliance (BUFARM) • Davao Oriental Farmers Alliance for Rural Decelopment (DOFARD)

ADVT

Amendment paves way for OK of antiterror act

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE PRINCIPAL SPONSOR OF THE PROposed Anti-Terrorism Act, which is now at the homestretch of the law-making process, has accepted a major amendment that will set the effectivity of the measure at two months after the May elections.

The amendment was proposed by Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and was accepted by the bill's sponsor, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, during Wednesday's deliberation on the measure.

Enrile also agreed to suspend the provisions of the bill one month before the May elections to allay fears that those in power would employ the legislation to harass their political opponents.

"It is easy to see that people in power or unscrupulous individuals could conceivably use the antiterror legislation as a tool to browbeat their electoral opponents," Pimentel said.

"Prudence dictates that the Senate should not allow them to have the opportunity to use the antiterror legislation for purposes other than that for which it was crafted."

During Wednesday's session, which lasted up to 11 p.m., Enrile also accepted the following major amendments:

- Suspected terrorists arrested by law enforcers without court warrant should be presented to judicial authorities before they are detained.
- The amount that persons wrongfully arrested under this legislation can claim as damaged was raised from P50,000 to P500,000 for each day of detention.

Pimentel said the provision that required that arrested terror suspects be presented before a judge prior to detention would prevent the physical maltreatment of the suspects.

"It is crucial that we circumscribe the powers of arrest and detention of suspects or people charged with terrorism by the police and law enforcement personnel," Pimentel said.

He said it would be the duty of the judge to ascertain the identity of the police or law enforcement personnel and the person they have arrested and presented before him.

He said the judge would also inquire from the arresting officers the reasons for the arrest and determine whether or not the suspect has been subjected to torture.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, February 2, 2007
Presentation of the Lord

1st Reading:	Mal 3:1-4
2nd Reading:	Heb 2:14-18
Gospel:	Luke 2:22-32

When the day came for the purification according to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the baby up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to God. And they offered a sacrifice as ordered in the law of the Lord: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

There lived in Jerusalem at this time a very upright and devout man named Simeon; the Holy Spirit was in him. He looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel, and he had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah of the Lord. So he was led into the Temple by the Holy Spirit at the time the parents brought the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law.

Simeon took the child in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Now, O Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace, for you have fulfilled your word and my eyes have seen your salvation, which you display for all the people to see.

"Here is the light you will reveal to the nations and the glory of your people Israel."

Commentary

The messenger went before the Lord—a refiner's fire, the fuller's lye, intent on purifying the children of God. This was as it was in the days gone by. But the one heralded has come and it is Jesus, who is like us in every way, but faithful and merciful before God on our behalf. Jesus was tempted, and he suffered, and so he can help us when we find ourselves in need.

Jesus was brought to the temple, in accordance with the law, to be given over—the first born to God on behalf of the people. And some of the remnant that waits in hope are there and rejoice on seeing him. Simeon blesses God, for now he can die in gratitude, crying out in joy, and declaring this child destined to be the cause of the rise and fall of many, a sign opposed. And we, all of us will be pierced with the sword (of the Word of God) so that many will be laid bare. And Anna, ever watchful, blesses God and speaks of the child to those who look for deliverance. Are we waiting for the Word of God to be made manifest? Are we like the remnant Simeon, Anna, Joseph, and Mary?

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

In celebration of the Feast of Candelaria there will be a Healing Mass at our Chapel of Sts. Padre Pio and Philomena on Friday, February 2, 2007 at 12:00 noon, 4F Goodwill Building 393 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave.Bel-Air Village Makati City.

Our celebrant will be noted healing priest, Father Teofilo Rustia of Bethesda Healing Ministries. We invite everyone to come and celebrate this special Mass by bringing candles to be blessed.

Also, starting February 3, 2007, the chapel will have First Saturday Masses. For our February 3 Mass, there will be a blessing of throats in honor of the Feast of St. Blaise, Patron Saint of people with throat problems.

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Red leader 'Joma' takes revolution to YouTube

From page A1

of post-9/11 US and European governments—are currently playing on YouTube.

The two music videos were posted two to three months ago, according to the popular video sharing website.

With guitar and violin accompaniment, Sison sings the Spanish and Filipino versions of "Bella Ciao," an Italian partisan song from World War II, and a Filipino classic inspired by the poem "Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa" by Andres Bonifacio, father of the Philippine Revolution against Spain.

In an e-mail to the INQUIRER yesterday, Sison, who turns 68 on Feb. 8 and is now in his 19th year of self-exile in the Netherlands, said two supporters of his posted the songs on YouTube.

Some 70 million videos are viewed daily on YouTube, which Google bought last November for $1.65 billion.

"My wife and I do not know (them) personally. But they are very friendly to me because they defend me against nasty remarks about my revolutionary stand," Sison said.

He was apparently referring to the Web denizens "jakej5" and "Amoneth," the acknowledged sources of the two videos.

Poetry in song

In Manila, Carl Ala, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas media officer, said "Bella" and "Pag-ibig" were actually two tracks from the CD that Sison started recording in 2004 and was commercially released in "alternative" record shops and bookstores last year.

The CD, titled "Poetry In Song," was conceptualized mainly to help draw support for Sison's legal defense against his being tagged a terrorist by the United States and the European Union.

Ala agreed with the observation that having Ka Joma on a youth-oriented website could help bring the leftist intellectual closer to today's mouse-clicking generation.

Reaching out to young

As Sison put it in response to a series of questions from the INQUIRER: "Yes, I am conscious of seeking to reach out to the young, especially because they were not yet born when I began my struggle. I always try to reach out to the young because they continue the struggle."

"I find them receptive to revolutionary ideas and revolutionary music. The crisis of the world capitalist system and the domestic ruling system of big *compradors* and landlords drives an increasing number of them to seek revolutionary change," he said.

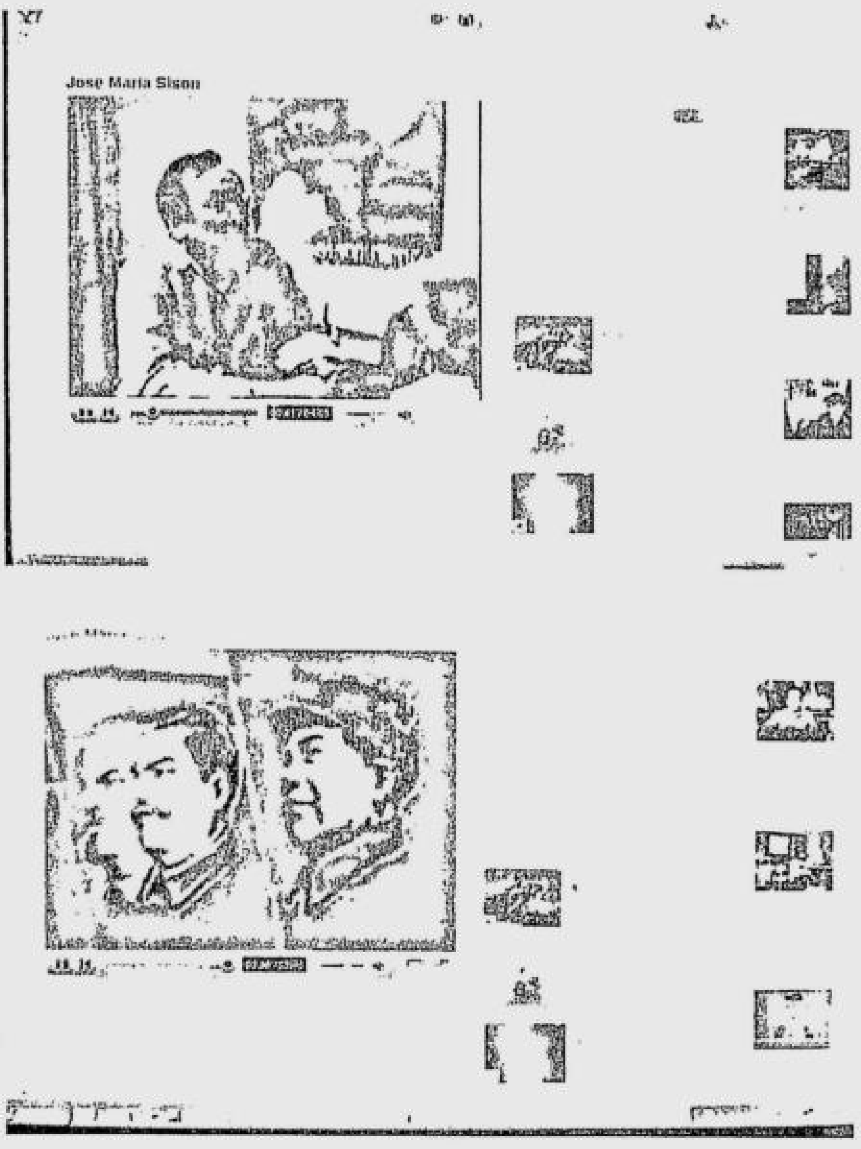
An activist who led student demonstrations against the Vietnam War in the 1960s, the exiled Sison has gone more public with his lyrical side in recent years.

Tribute

In March 2004, the INQUIRER reported that he had taken to singing videoke at his Utrecht apartment during more relaxed times with guests. This was according to his supporters in Manila, who then held a tribute marking Sison's 40th year in the revolutionary cause.

"Not known to many people before, I sang at home to relax. I sang in church when I was a small boy. Some friends have encouraged me since two years ago to do recordings. Of course, my singing is something extra to whatever I have already accomplished," he said in the e-mail.

The two videos were more of a montage tracing the Marxist-Maoist struggle.



"Bella Ciao," being a universally adopted hymn of patriotism, draws imagery from paintings of Latin American peasant-warriors to Soviet propaganda materials resurrected from the Cold War era, climaxing with the portraits of Marx, Stalin, Lenin and Mao.

Comments

The "Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa" contains footage of violent dispersal of rallies in Manila, notably the infamous "Mendiola Massacre," as well as scenes of poverty in the city and the countryside, and communist New People's Army guerrillas shaking hands with the poor.

When accessed by the INQUIRER last night, "Bella" had since been viewed just over 4,000 times, and "Pag-ibig," close to 400 times.

All together, the "comments" panel for each song has spawned close to 40 entries, both pro- and anti-Joma—the latter apparently accounting for the "nasty remarks" Sison referred to.

But as the Dutch-based recording artist keenly noted: "The feedback (I've been getting) is about my political ideas. It is not at all about the songs or about my singing. I am therefore encouraged to sing."

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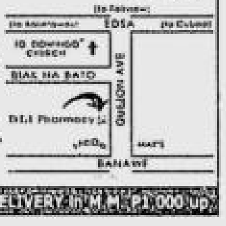

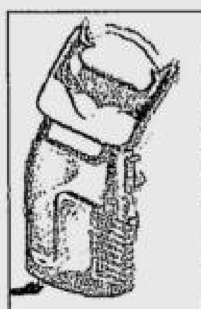

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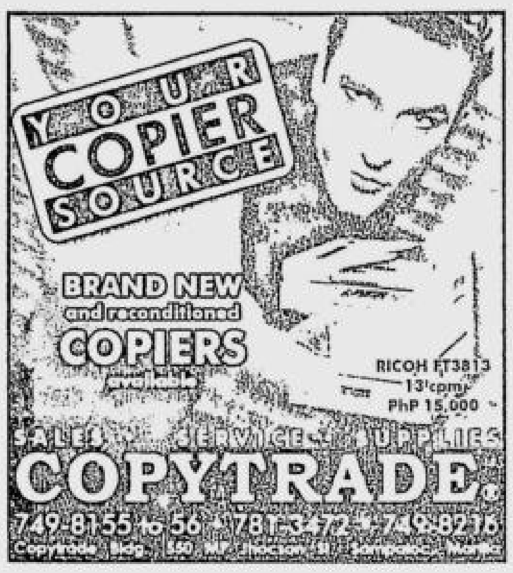

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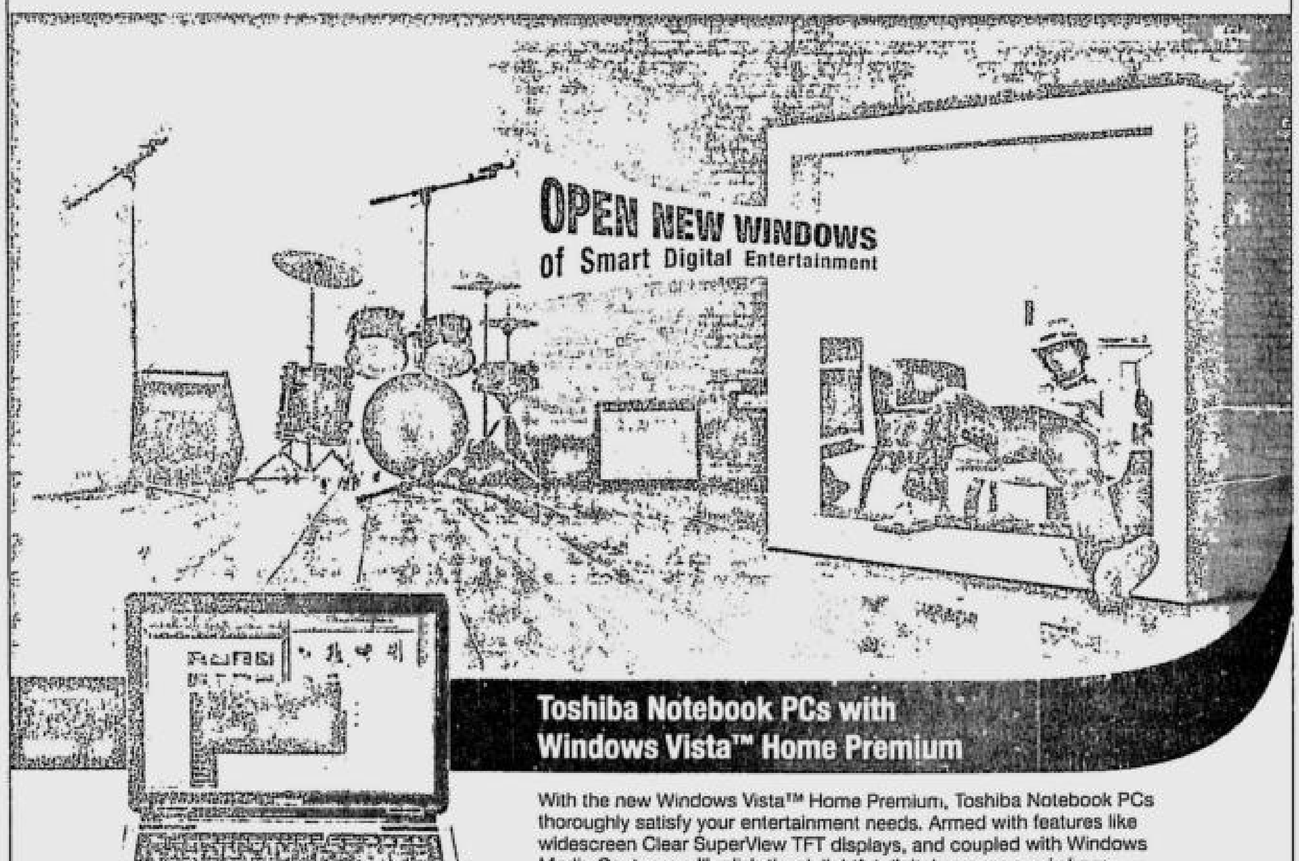

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ABUNDA: The pulse of the masses in the palm of his hand.

DEFENSOR: Just call him "tol."

Mike D taps star maker ...

From page A1

Defensor also says he is doing a campaign jingle from a Manny Pacquiao song—"Para Sa Iyo ang Laban Na Ito."

"I think he is brilliant," Defensor yesterday said of Abunda. "He can be lowbrow, he can be highbrow. Everybody loves him," gushed Defensor who swore Abunda had agreed to steer his campaign for friendship's sake.

"We've been friends for three years now and I would call him from time to time to get his advice. I really admire his feel for the pulse of the masses," Defensor said.

Defensor apparently saw Abunda's influence during the 2004 presidential election when a few candidates got a big boost from the TV host. They reportedly included Senate topnotcher Manuel "Mar" Roxas III and President Macapagal-Arroyo. Abunda hosted most of Roxas' campaign sorties; Ms Arroyo appeared in Abunda's television show.

But unlike in previous elections, Abunda is expected to play a bigger role in Defensor's campaign than any other candidate in the past.

Considering that the vast majority of the electorate are in the C, D and E classes, Defensor said it was good to have Abunda in his team managing every detail of his campaign strategy—from his pictorials to his media spots to guest appearances.

TV presence crucial

Defensor said that part of the decision to have Abunda on his team was due to studies that showed that eight out of 10 voters made their choices based on what they saw on television.

With a third of the voters in their late teens and early twenties, Defensor felt that Abunda suited his campaign strategy well.

But Defensor admitted that taking in Abunda as a core strategist was a gamble, considering that politics and show business were two different worlds.

"Abunda is a grandmaster in his world but I believe that his talents can be helpful in making stars in politics," said Defensor.

"He has this cutting edge creativity which could be risky in traditional politics. But taking risks is part of my character," he added.

Call me 'Tol'

Defensor is already presenting himself as a man of the masses, telling reporters to just call him "Tol," short for "Utol," street lingo for big brother.

"It's important in the campaign that you identify yourself with somebody or something," Defensor said a day after his TV spot, where people call him "Tol," came out.

To prove his point, he asked the reporters whom they instantly associate with Sen. Francis Pangilinan when his name is mentioned. "Sharon," was the reply in unison, referring to the reelectionist senator's wife, megastar Sharon Cuneta.

Other candidates have started to jump-start their campaigns.

So far, Senate President Manuel Villar, Sen. Ralph Recto and Bukidnon Rep. Miguel Zubiri have appeared in television ads in the past few days.

Apparently mindful that the election campaign period had yet to start, the ads saw them talking about certain issues and not their election bids.

Pressed for more details on how his campaign will be run, Defensor only revealed his plan to enlist Abunda and that his campaign jingle will take off from Pacquiao's popular song "Para Sa Iyo ang Laban Na Ito."

"Somebody bought the rights of the song for me," said Defensor.

With Pacquiao and Abunda in his corner, Defensor feels he will be unbeatable. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

P7.2-B budget for polls awaits GMA OK

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE MONEY TO FUND THE MAY ELECTIONS is in the bag, according to Rep. Joey Salceda who chairs the House appropriations committee.

The 2007 budget, ratified by both chambers of Congress and set to be signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo, provides P5.1 billion for the local and national polls and another P2.1 billion for the synchronized barangay and youth council (Sangguniang Kabataan) elections in October.

The first trillion-peso budget in history should bury opposition suspicions of a so-called no-elections scenario in May, said House Speaker Jose de Venecia.

The P7.2 billion election budget was indisputable proof that Congress' power of the purse can be harnessed to advance the cause of democracy, he said.

"With this budget, every Filipino will be given a chance to cast his or her vote," De Venecia said.

The Speaker said the bulk of the P1.26-trillion budget is dominated by capital expenditures unlike previous budgets where much of the appropriations went to the payment of the salaries of state employees.

"It will finance countryside development and is the single biggest push for the antipoverty program," he said, stressing that the trillion-peso budget would undoubtedly pump-prime the economy.

"One of the insults we had to face was that we've had no new budget for the past three years," said De Venecia, as he thanked senators for finally getting over their objections.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said the allocation for electoral exercises was made even before the administration went full steam ahead with its drive to change the Charter late last year.

When he submitted the proposed 2007 budget to Congress in September 2005, Andaya said "big money" was needed to hold the May elections.

In addition to the national and barangay polls, he said overseas voting for migrant Filipino workers would cost P238 million while a list-up of voters for the SK polls would add P139 million to the total.

In the 2004 national election, there were 43.5 million registered voters and 295,459 precincts in 41,972 barangay. The number of voters has since risen to about 45 million.

Senate bill seeks 34% discount for elderly

THE IMPOSITION OF the value added tax (VAT) has prevented senior citizens from enjoying their 12 percent discount in the purchases of medicines and other goods and services. In fact, the seniors citizens' discount has effectively been reduced to just eight percent.

For this reason, Sen. Edgardo Angara is seeking support for Senate Bill No. 2569, which calls for an increase in the senior citizens' discount to 34 percent to cover the discrepancy.

Under the existing law, senior citizens are entitled to a full 20 percent discount on the purchase of goods, services, medical and dental services, transport fare, funeral and burial services, among other things.

Angara, author of the Senior Citizen's Law in 1992, had talks with Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and Bureau of Internal Revenue Commissioner Jose Bunag late last year to address the issue.

"During our talks, they were able to see the real intent of the Senior Citizen's Law. That is, to grant benefits and special privileges to the Filipino elderly. With the proposed 34 percent senior citizen's discount, the negative effect of the 12 percent VAT will be compensated," Angara said in a press statement.

Angara also called for the empowerment of the senior citizens in contributing to nation building. He urged their families and their communities to reaffirm the Filipino tradition of caring for the elderly.

To date, there are about six million elderly Filipinos in the country.

Ople job fair today

THE KA BLAS F. OPLE 80th Birthday Job Fair opens today at the Activity Center of Market! Market! mall in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City with several employment-providers seeking to employ workers and professionals for more than a hundred local and overseas jobs.

"We invite jobseekers to participate in this one-day event to commemorate the 80th birthday of the country's longest serving labor secretary, the late Ka Blas Ople," Susan Ople, president of the Blas F. Ople Policy Center said.

The late Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople is acknowledged as the Father of Overseas Employment and architect of the Labor Code of the Philippines. His birthday will also be celebrated with a Mass offered by his family at the Libingan ng mga Bayani, 9 a.m. on Saturday. Ople's friends and associates are invited to attend the Mass.

Sen. Mar Roxas, Labor Secretary Arturo Brion, POEA Administrator Rosalinda Baldoz and Taguig City Mayor Freddie Tinga will grace the formal opening of the Job Fair at a ribbon-cutting ceremony scheduled at 9 a.m. The job fair will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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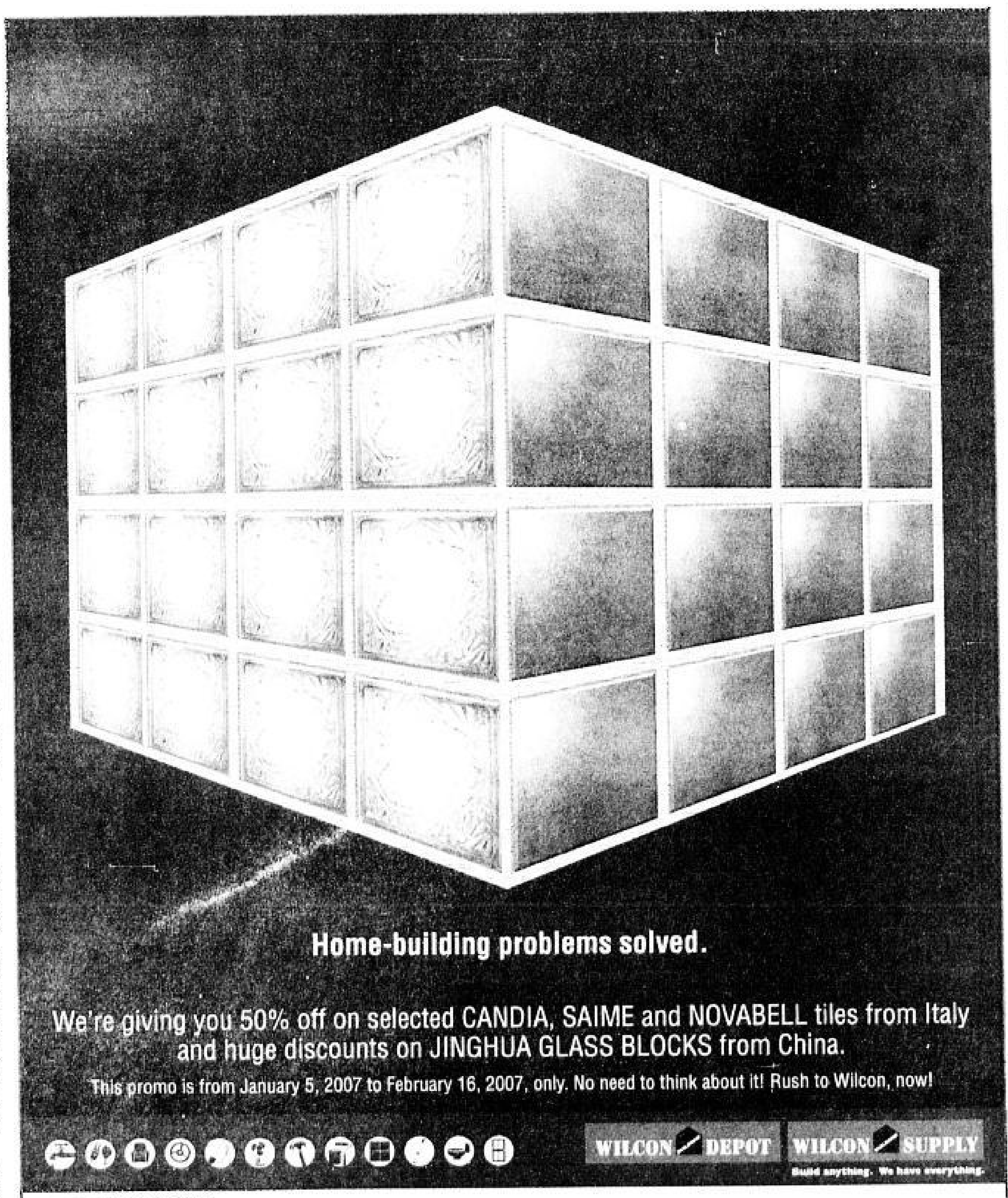

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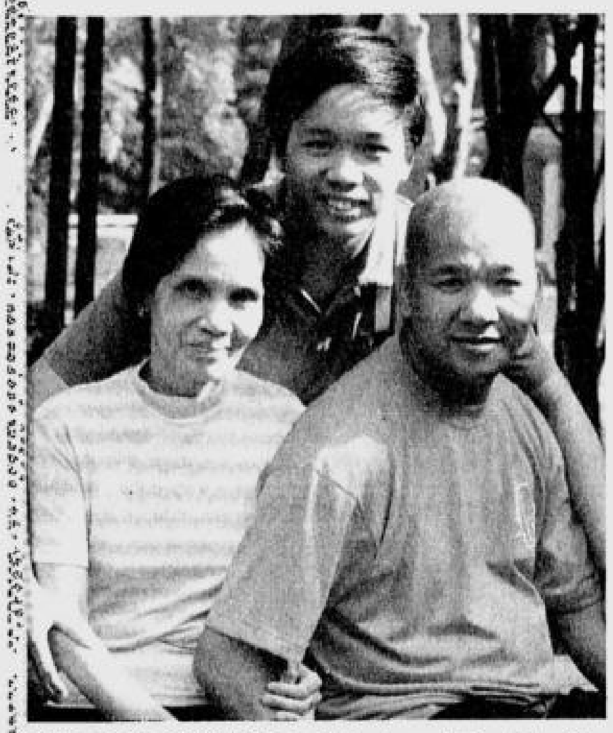
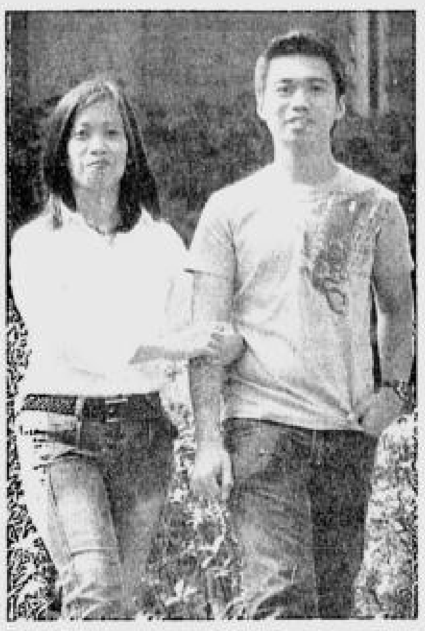


THE BUENAVENTURAS, Rolando and Zenaida with son Keith, work on disciplining their children and setting goals with the Golden Rule thrown in for good measure. AUGUST DELA CRUZ



VON KARLO SINENCE with proud sister Angie: From the Baloi Central Elementary School in Lanao del Norte to Parang High School in Marikina to a most outstanding student in algebra at the Ateneo de Manila University. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

What makes public school ...

From page A1

also to excel. Sometimes, in college and in competitions, they even surpass their private school counterparts.

Poverty can be a hindrance, but it can be overcome. But how?

Ask parents, students

In 2005, together with Ma. Isabel Sison-Dionisio, a family and marriage counselor, Nerisa Fernandez, an Ateneo parent volunteer, and Pathways to Higher Education, an Ateneo group working with public school students, I spearheaded a study to discover what exactly makes public school children excel in school.

What better way than to ask the parents and the students themselves?

With the encouragement of Ateneo president Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, S.J., and the cooperation of Marikina Mayor Marides Fernando and Bulacan Gov. Josie de la Cruz, we surveyed more than 2,000 families of achieving students in 17 public high schools—eight in Marikina (Concepcion, Concepcion Integrated, Marikina, Marikina Heights, Parang, Tañong and Sta. Elena) and nine in Bulacan (Calumpit National, Dr. Felipe de Jesus Memorial, Guiguinto National, Lolomboy National, Meycauayan, Obando National, Parada, Prenza and San Roque).

As far as we know, this study is the first of its kind in the country.

The results of our study are heartening. The secret, it turns out, lies not so much in resources or enrichment, but in family values.

Many private school students go to tutorial centers after school, but public school children cannot afford to do this. The former usually have computers at home, which is not the case for the latter.

Parents of good private school students are generally academically successful, while many parents of public school kids did not finish school.

Powerful strategies

But according to our study, the families of our best public school students have more powerful strategies.

These are their secrets—discipline, goal-setting, self-reliance, strong family bonds and a conducive home environment.

Ninety-nine percent of the families of public school achievers in the survey agree that "discipline is a responsibility of the parents and an act of love."

Parents enforce discipline consistently and early on, mainly through family discussions and through being good role models themselves.

Discipline in our country usually has a negative connotation, but in this study, it simply means instructing children or teens to behave well, such as being responsible for themselves.

When parents recognize the reasons for children's misbehavior, they can balance the latter's limits and choices.

The parents in the study are neither too strict nor too lenient. They set clear limits, listen to their children, and ensure appropriate consequences if the children err.

Discipline is the first step to success, for it fosters a sense of responsibility.

With discipline, children can work toward a goal. More than 90 percent of the parents help their children achieve personal goals, foremost of which is to finish school.

Early on, parents discuss career options with their children. They do not rely much on wishful thinking (such as winning the lottery); instead, they set specific and realistic goals.

These parents have high expectations of their children—and just as important, their children are aware of such expectations.

Effective communication (listening and talking) is important, and so is time management.

Hands-on parenting

Look at how discipline and goal-setting work in the family of Rolando "Rolly" and Zenaida Buenaventura.

When the children were young, they used to fight over toys. So Rolly confiscated the toys and replaced them with books, and now the children value books over their other possessions.

The parents believe in the Golden Rule: Do unto others what we want them to do unto us. During quarrels, Rolly acts as mediator, and asks each of his children to apologize and resolve to treat one another as they would want to be treated.

He supervises the children's homework, and wakes them up in the morning.

He monitors TV watching by having only two channels available in the house, and limits the choices to game shows.

He reminds his children to study hard in order to finish college.

He tells them about people in the community who ended up jobless because they took the easy way out and did not finish school—"*Sumunod lang sa agos* (They just went with the flow)."

Rolly and Zenaida nurture their children well.

The eldest child, Keith, who graduated from Sta. Elena High School, is now a Pathways scholar, majoring in applied mathematics at the Ateneo.

Self-reliance, perseverance

Most of the families in our survey believe that success is achieved through hard work, not luck or fate. They believe in God, but they also know that God helps those who help themselves.

The children are patient, persistent and capable of delaying gratification.

Successful students believe that they can control their lives, while their less successful classmates are ruled by chance, *malas* (bad luck), or other factors.

Good students take responsibility for their actions. Poor students believe they are the victims of fate: They blame genetics ("We took after our parents—they were not good in math"); the teacher ("She plays favorites, and I am not her favorite"); or society ("We do not have enough money to go to good schools, so we may not be able to pass the college entrance test").

IQ counts a little, but not much. Perseverance is more important.

Never giving up

Von Sinence underwent difficulties, but he never gave up.

Says Von: "I graduated valedictorian from Baloi Central Elementary School in Lanao del Norte. But when I moved to Manila for high school, I thought that it was a harder world. During the first week, not enough chairs were available in the classroom, so I had to sit on the floor. I also did not participate much in class because everyone spoke English, which I found difficult. Being in the star section terrified me.

"But I did not give up. Gradually, I became well-liked in school. I ran for a position in the student council, and to my surprise, I won, even though I did not think many students really knew who I was. I soon became Top One in our batch."

As for Francis Alcausin, his mother Liberty believes in luck "sometimes," but says that "90 percent of success is due to hard work."

She denies herself simple pleasures, like movies or pocketbooks, in order to save for her children's school needs. But her children, she says, are worth all the sacrifices in the world. *(To be concluded)*

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In limbo

EDITORIAL

WITH CUSTOMARY POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE, retired PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane was installed yesterday as secretary of national defense. Rumors that the military would never submit to the "indignity" of being supervised by a policeman have proven to be merely that—rumors. Perhaps the ties of alumni loyalty among graduates of the Philippine Military Academy have trumped all objections. That, and of course Ebdane's loyalty to the Commander in Chief.

Typically, only members of the Senate have stated their objections, with their colleagues in the House shying away from the controversy. But Ebdane's appointment concerns both chambers. He has essentially been promoted from one Cabinet portfolio to another, without even obtaining a by-your-leave from Congress for his first job. And it will be several months—straddled by what the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and diplomatic observers already call a crucial election—before Congress can take up his new appointment.

But that will be the job of the 14th, and not the 13th, Congress. For all intents and purposes, the useful life of the 13th Congress comes to an end on Feb. 9. After that, it's off to the hustings. Since the next Commission on Appointments that can convene will be that of the 14th, and no longer the 13th Congress, all ad interim appointments of President Macapagal-Arroyo will be deemed to have lapsed. Which means a new round of appointment papers will emanate from Malacañang over the next few weeks. In that manner, the fiction of constitutional compliance will be maintained.

The reality is that the President shows every intention of being satisfied with Cabinet members continuing in a kind of constitutional limbo. She is mistress of the superficially legal maneuver. When an irate Senate challenged her August 2004 Cabinet appointments, the Supreme Court said the President had appointed "acting secretaries" in August, and then, when Congress was in recess in September, she reappointed the same officials, this time in an "ad interim" capacity.

The Senate questioned the original "acting capacity" appointments, saying that Cabinet members should have been subjected to the approval of the Commission on Appointments. The senators were obviously piqued by the fact that appointments made when Congress is on recess are deemed confirmed unless the legislature rejects them outright—or goes into its next recess. Which only means the President gets to reappoint the officials Congress never confirmed.

The Supreme Court said the President complied with the law. And she did—though clearly it is becoming a case of following the letter but not the spirit of the law.

An ad interim appointment shouldn't mean it becomes ad aeternam; what is temporary is never meant to be permanent. As Fr. Joaquin Bernas, S.J. wrote in a commentary on the Constitution quoted by the Supreme Court, "Acting appointments are a way of temporarily filling important offices but, if abused, they can also be a way of circumventing the need for confirmation by the Commission on Appointments." This was precisely the Senate's point; and it is becoming a point the Palace seems to love ignoring.

The substance of legislative checks and balances when it comes to executive appointments is only as good as the willingness of Congress to assert its powers. Ebdane might very well be rejected after May by a new Congress—or then again, maybe not. (Just as Congress has repeatedly bypassed the appointment of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, who is going on his third year of basically squatting in his office.) Does it matter? He would have done his job (whatever that is) during the elections.

The pity of it all is that the Senate is the only chamber raising hell, and it is running out of time. A greater pity is that the Constitution is so obviously being manipulated by the executive, but then even our present Charter, filled with provisions to protect against an abusive president, could never have imagined a situation such as the one we have at present. It's a matter of appoint first, and refuse to answer questions even later.

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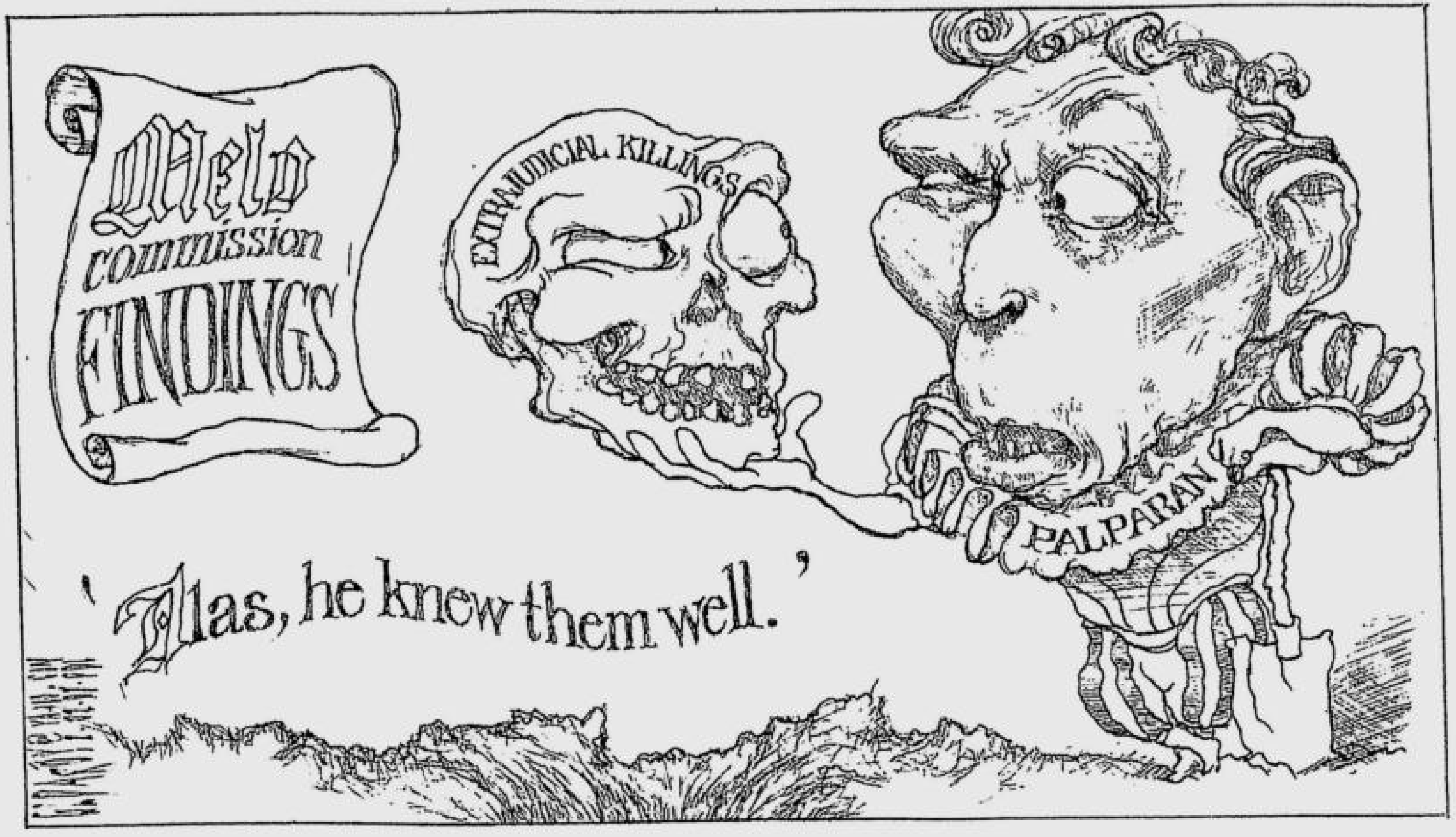


RP should be thinking of desalination plants now

(Continued from last Wednesday)

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

IN THE PREVIOUS COLUMN, I POINTED OUT that about two-thirds of the water consumed by an average household is used to flush the toilet. This is part of the dwindling supply of fresh water that is cleansed and treated with chemicals to make it clean enough to drink, and we waste it only to flush our poop to the septic tank.

It cannot be helped, people would say, the toilet has to be flushed. But there is another way, and it is already being done in many cities like Hong Kong. Hong Kong is surrounded by an inexhaustible supply of free water: the sea. The problem is that the water is salty. But you don't need fresh water to flush the toilet. The poop doesn't care if the water that washes it down is fresh or salty. So why not use sea water to flush the toilets by having dual plumbing—one for fresh water for washing, cooking and drinking, and one for sea water for flushing the toilet? That is how Hong Kong and other progressive cities have conserved their fresh water. The hotels and new residences there now have dual plumbing.

I understand that the big hotels on Mactan island, like Shangri-La, already have dual plumbing. This is the sensible way to go.

There are now non-metal pipes, like PVC, as well as plumbing fixtures that are not corroded by salt water. The drawback is that plumbing costs for a building or a house would increase slightly. But you save much more money in the long run, because two-thirds of the water you consume is free, or almost free.

I think this is going to be the wave of the future: using plentiful sea water more as the supply of fresh water dwindles. Developers of subdivisions not far from the sea should put dual plumbing in their houses. The new high-rise condos in Fort Bonifacio and elsewhere should do the same. And perhaps Congress should nudge them by passing the appropriate law.

The Philippine construction industry is very slow in adapting to new techniques. Many contractors still use a lot of form lumber for scaffolding. Some big projects use so much form lumber that whole forests were probably decimated to supply the wood, which ends up being chopped up and sold for firewood.

Modern construction now uses recyclable and reusable steel tubes for scaffolding. In fact, builders can rent them from companies. But there are still contractors who are slow to adapt. I suppose the same thing will happen to dual plumbing. Some will immediately see the advantage; others will be slow to adapt.

Also, with global warming upon us and an impending water shortage for millions of the world's population, while the sea at the same time swallows up small islands and coastal areas (see Inquirer's Page 1, Jan. 31), the world should now work harder to develop cheaper desalination plants. For with the ice caps melting and ocean levels rising and drowning low-lying areas, there will be no additional source of fresh water but the sea. If sun power, which is also free, is used to power the desalination plants instead of electricity or oil or other fossil fuels, the cost of converting sea water into fresh water may not be that prohibitive.

Global warming may mean not only thirsty millions but also very hungry millions as agriculture needs fresh water, plenty of it. Hence, desalination plants could be the savior of millions.

The Philippines should be thinking about that now. In particular, Cebu, which is running out of fresh water.

On the other hand, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) is allowing precious fresh water to go to waste not far from Metro Manila. This water is collected from several rivers and streams but it is not put to use. Every day, tens of millions of gallons of precious fresh water go over a dam and flows out uselessly into the sea.

I am referring to the Wawa Dam in Rodriguez (formerly Montalban), Rizal, about which I have written many columns before. This used to be the main source of water for Manila. When Angat Dam was completed, Wawa was abandoned and the steel pipes connecting it to La Mesa Dam rusted away.

But now water from Angat is no longer enough to supply the needs of Metro Manila and neighboring areas. Every summer, there is a water shortage, no matter how high the water levels are in the reservoirs during the rainy season and no matter how high the floods are.

The water from Wawa can fill the shortage. A private contractor, a partner in the construction of a dam in Nueva Ecija, has offered to harness the waters of Wawa and pipe it to La Mesa for free. But for some strange reason, the NWRB does not want to give it the go signal. The NWRB and the contractor, San Lorenzo Ruiz Builders, have been negotiating for the last 13 years and there is no end in sight. The red tape involved here deserves a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. And yet reducing red tape was one of the promises made by President Macapagal-Arroyo when she first assumed the presidency.

Meanwhile, trillions of cubic meters of precious fresh water have already flowed over the dam and into the sea. By the looks of it, millions more will be lost before Wawa will be harnessed. But this summer, as sure as the sun rises in the east, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System will warn the public of an impending water shortage.

If the NWRB doesn't want San Lorenzo Ruiz Builders to harness Wawa, why doesn't it give the job to another firm which may be willing to do it? Why does it do nothing and allow millions of gallons of fresh water to go to waste instead of being used by a thirsty population?

On seeking imperfect leaders

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

PLATO WANTED THE STATE TO BE GOVERNED by a philosopher-king, but we Filipinos seem to want to do him better: We insist that, in addition, our leaders be pure and without blemish. We judge our leaders too harshly. We ask of them intentions so altruistic and minds so brilliant, standards so unreal that, invariably, we set up ourselves to be disappointed—and force our leaders to lie.

Banish this search for the perfect leader, and despair not, though the pool of candidates is admittedly rather shallow and the candidates themselves hollow. As the saying goes, perfection is the enemy of the good. Let us settle for flawed leaders, and I say this not in behalf of any specific candidate since, surely, none of them would confess to be so blemished that they will even care for this double-bladed endorsement.

And therein lies the trap in our search for perfection. Electoral candidates pretend to be so chaste in their soul and body (the body, especially), since to admit to any flaw is fatal to their candidacy. Stiff lawyers and technocrats try to act cool and folksy because it's a sin to be "*elitista*," while movie actors try hard to look serious and intellectual because it's embarrassing to have merely common sense. It's always better, guys, just to be yourselves. You don't fool anyone anyway, so just drop it.

Voters pretend that their chosen ones are so selfless, and feel let down when they discover the faintest sign of personal ambition, the slightest tilt toward partisan loyalty, the mildest liking for the perks of office. Get real, dear voter. To borrow from F. Scott Fitzgerald, the politicians are not so different from you and me, only worse.

Let us spare ourselves this mutual hypocrisy. There are candidates who genuinely care and wish to "serve the poor." But surely the ego lurks there somewhere, at its most innocent, seeking affirmation that one can improve the human condition, or in its more sinister, lusting for power and pelf. On the other hand, voters are thrown into either-or choices: either the perfect, principled choice, or, if he is not "winnable," the terrible lout who can help me.

Let us comfort ourselves with the long list of imperfect heroes. John Adams, hero of the American Revolution, actually lawyered for British soldiers charged with the infamous Boston Massacre out of a larger concern that justice be done. Filipino warriors during the Philippine-American War executed Chinese merchants who wouldn't cough up revolutionary taxes—and this much the Supreme Court documents. And how many of our so-called nationalist leaders actually collaborated with the Japanese during World War II?

In China, Chairman Mao killed millions of his countrymen through starvation because he bungled his Great Leap Forward. If that were not bad enough, his personal physician now writes that, even in his old age, Mao loved to frolic with young girls and, horrors, never bathed, never brushed his teeth. God sakes, how could you, oh Great Helmsman, dear Chairman and Teacher?

This brings us to more typical, more contemporary failings. Recall John F. Kennedy and his fondness for Marilyn Monroe and many others. Or more recently, William Jefferson Clinton trysting with Monica Lewinsky in the hidden nooks of the White House. France's socialist President François Mitterand led a double life with his mistress, with whom he bore a child. Erap would have complained about the holier-than-thou gathered at Edsa II: You asked me to be Sir Galahad, when all I wanted to be was Lancelot.

Confucianism spoke of "rule by virtue," but I think that for the Filipino Catholic, our standard of virtue is far too ascetic. After all, if our religion says that we must aspire to be Christ-like, then anyone who is "unwilling to lay down his life for his friends" cannot be worthy of our vote. The problem is, Christ sacrificed Himself to save humanity until kingdom come, but our elected leaders pledge to serve merely a small pocket of humanity for the next three years. Let's give the aspiring "Kristos" a break, pardon the double entendre. After all, since the Word was made Flesh, and the Divine was incarnated in mortal form, our goal is not to deny our humanity altogether but merely to transcend it.

Unlike Plato, let us not ask if the candidate is fit to be a philosopher—though I suspect, being philosophical was never on the Pinoy list of dream talents. Let us not look for fancy college degrees from pedigreed schools. Fernando Poe Jr. was a dropout but it was a UP Ph.D. who conspired with Garci to cheat. And I have met lawyers from provincial law schools who could match wits with the best and the brightest that Manila can offer.

Let us not demean those who cannot speak English, the favored tongue of the well-schooled, and listen instead to what they have to say. Let us not dismiss movie stars just because of their craft. Bill Clinton said that politics is show biz for ugly people. But, I ask, why should the ugly have it all to themselves?

Let us not demand that the candidate be fit to be a saint. We are not the College of Cardinals convening to elect the next pope, or whichever sacred body gathers to beatify the holy ones. But rather we are the elect of a religion that revels in giving everyone "a second chance." St. Augustine's "Confessions" will make you blush, but, hey, he's still a saint, and if you doubt that, you'll have to contend with the loyal alumni of the Pontifical University on España Avenue.

For the May 2007 elections, seek not genius but common sense, not purity but merely uncommon virtue.

* * *

Comments to passionforreason@gmail.com

All for naught

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE CENTERPIECE OF THE MELO COMMISSION report on the wave of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines is the recommendation that retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and other military commanders be "held responsible" for the executions in their areas of assignment under the doctrine of command responsibility.

In its 89-page report, the commission chaired by retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo confirmed that "majority of the victims were leftist-activist militants," and the suspects were the military. But Melo explained to the press after the submission of the report to President Macapagal-Arroyo, "We don't want to tag the whole military establishment, only elements of the military who were allowed to do their thing without supervision from higher officers."

Melo, in an attempt to show even-handedness, spread the blame over several groups, saying "some killings were attributed to politicians, some security guards of landlords but majority of the killings pointed to these military elements (as culprits)." The report did single out Palparan, who had been branded by leftists as the "executioner" in the killings during his tour of duty as brigade and division commander in Mindoro, Samar and Central Luzon.

"You know, he has said he inspired them (the killings)," Melo told the press, "You can hook the fish through the mouth." Melo was referring to press interviews in which Palparan had admitted having "inspired" some people to avenge the crimes committed in their communities by the New People's Army, whom Palparan and the Armed Forces had accused of responsibility for the depredations, in the context of the administration's anti-insurgency campaign.

Although the report recommended holding Palparan and his cohorts responsible, it fell short of recommending their prosecution, raising questions over where the report would go from there. This failure to carry it beyond the "command responsibility" issue represents a fatal flaw in the report, which the Melo Commission completed in six months.

The recommendation on Palparan and the legal framework of "command responsibility" have in fact generated new controversies, providing loopholes which the Armed Forces and Philippine National Police are now exploiting to clear their men of responsibility for the killings. The report's failure to recommend their prosecutions has put on the spotlight the resolve of the Arroyo administration to put an end to the rampage of death squads and raises the more important issue of whether the President is prepared to make top military generals accountable for the killings and to take concrete steps to implement the Melo Commission report. Indeed, the report has become a new test on the human rights commitment of the administration and of the tension between civilian and military authorities.

The latter issue was underlined by Dita Indah Sari, the Indonesian human rights campaigner and Magsaysay Awards laureate, who said that, as in Indonesia, the Philippine government appeared averse to the idea of taking its military leaders to account. "It is very clear that the states are behind this to protect their own clique," Sari said in Manila. "The people who do this are the top generals… they are untouchables. The governments did not want to have conflicts with these people."

President Arroyo showed her true colors at the vin d'honneur in Malacañang when she told the diplomatic corps that both the Left and the Right were responsible for the killings and that she believed "99.0 percent of the military were good, patriotic and hardworking."

For his part, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon lost no time in extricating the military from responsibility for the killings While he admitted that some soldiers were involved, he said communist rebels and goons hired by politicians were behind most of the killings. The principle of command responsibility of military officers does not cover extrajudicial executions since such criminal acts "only involve the individual," he said. He ruled out a court martial for Palparan and other retired officers, saying they were no longer under military jurisdiction.

After the Melo Commission submitted its report, the President issued a set of six instructions. The key points call for: the commission to continue its work and "submit supplemental reports from time to time"; the formation of a fact-finding committee from the justice and defense departments to work with the Commission on Human Rights to "delve deeper" into the involvement of military personnel in the killings and prosecuting "culpable parties"; and the defense department and the Armed Forces to come up with a definition of command responsibility.

The key question is, what to do with Palparan. The instructions were not clear on how the President would address the recommendation on holding Palparan accountable under command responsibility. She would be confronting Esperon's contention that the military could no longer hold the retired military officer accountable for extrajudicial killing.

The head of the Philippine National Police's Task Force Usig, Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, didn't appear eager to take action against Palparan. He said the PNP had to ascertain whether evidence warranted the filing of cases against Palparan.

With the six-point instructions, all things point to a white-wash. The six-month effort of the commission has come to naught. The Melo Commission should quit and stop this farce.

A lopsided battle

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

A "DAVID AND GOLIATH" STRUGGLE IS HOW former INQUIRER columnist Larry Henares pictures the current battle between milk manufacturers and breastfeeding advocates, including officials of the Department of Health.

In an article in response to a letter to the editor written by lawyer Felicitas Aquino-Arroyo (and printed in the INQUIRER), Henares, who at 80-plus years old has found a new advocacy, says the struggle is "a matter of Public Good versus Private Greed, babies' health versus corporate profit."

The lightning rod is the Implementing Rules and Regulations governing EO 51, the National Milk Code (1986), revised recently, that Arroyo in her letter termed "abusive." In that same letter, Arroyo also stated that her clients, the milk companies and the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), "fully acknowledge that breastfeeding is the gold standard in infant feeding."

"It would be nice if it were true, but on record, (the PHAP) and its predecessor the Drug Association of the Philippines (DAP) which represent the milk industry since time immemorial, have always viciously opposed every public health initiative in the Philippines," says Henares. "They were against EO 51, the National Milk Code (1986), Generics Act of 1988, the Compulsory Licensing of Drug Patents, the Rooming-In and Breastfeeding Act of 1992, and oppose every attempt of the government to import low-cost medicines, even their own brands manufactured in India where drug prices are one-tenth those in the Philippines."

* * *

THE MILK industry has also used its advertising clout to influence the way the issue is (barely) covered in local media, declares Henares.

Every means to weaken support for the IRR or have it watered-down has been exploited by the milk companies, he recounts. "They even got Robert Ludan, economic counselor of the US Embassy and David Katch, US trade representative for the Pacific Region, as well as the American Chamber of Commerce (led by Roger Dallas of Mead Johnson) to put pressure on the Philippine government in behalf of the milk companies."

Henares reminds Arroyo that the same IRR she assails "was endorsed by her husband, Sen. Joker Arroyo, for implementation together with 20 out of 23 senators, 100 percent of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, and United Church of Christ." The Revised IRR, he says, is the result of the collaboration of the Department of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Unicef, following the letter and spirit of the National Milk Code, "in accordance with our international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, duly ratified by the Senate."

Henares and other breastfeeding advocates also challenge PHAP's contention that "EO 51 explicitly limits its coverage only to 'infants' or babies up to 12 months."

Section 3 of EO 51 on the Scope of the Code, says, "The Code applies to the following products: breast milk substitutes, including infant formula…" According to Henares, " If EO 51 intended to limit its coverage to infant formula, it would have worded it 'limited to infant formula.' The word "including" means that there are products other than infant formula that are included in the coverage of EO 51, and those include follow-up cow's milk, soy milk, evaporated milk, condensed milk, if in the opinion of the DOH, they are being used or marketed as breast milk substitutes, and advertised to undermine the breastfeeding culture."

* * *

HENARES maintains that the IRR is intended to regulate milk formula advertising, "with the view of leveling the playing field between the milk companies and the advocates of breastfeeding, which is grossly lopsided."

To cite some examples, the advertising budgets of milk companies range from P2 to P3 billion a year while the budget for promotion of breastfeeding of the DOH, Unicef, WHO and the breastfeeding advocates "is practically ZERO."

The top-level management of the local milk companies "are paid as much as $20,000 a month or more than a million pesos monthly and includes the best of experts in every field," claims Henares. While DOH officials are "mostly underpaid and breastfeeding advocates are unpaid for services rendered on a voluntary basis."

And we're not talking undervalued centavos here. Henares says the National Economic and Development Authority categorically states that formula milk is imported at the rate of $57 million a year or P3.1 billion annually. "This is packaged and in turn sold to the public at P21.5 billion in sales revenue, according to estimates by the WHO. Milk companies therefore have an estimated gross profit of P18 billion a year while the last budget of the DOH for breastfeeding was only P3 million in the last budget year."

* * *

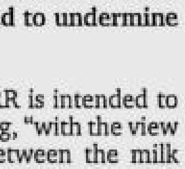
NEITHER is this struggle new, nor is it taking place only in our country. The conflict, recounts Henares, started in 1939 when Dr. Cecily Williams, in her speech "Milk and Murder," branded the milk companies "Baby Killers" and started a train of events that led to the International Milk Code of 1981, the Innocenti Declaration of 1990, plus a whole slew of international covenants and agreements, including an international boycott of milk companies that exists to this day. "It led to the assassination of two labor leaders involved in strikes against the milk companies—Meliton Roxas in 1989, and Diosdado Fortuna in 2005—and the murder last year of Assistant Solicitor General Nestor Ballocillo, who was involved in the court cases against milk companies and against Piatco."

Henares reminds that while Piatco stands to lose billions if the government's case is successfully pursued, the milk companies stand to lose much more: P18 billion in gross profits every year. A question left floating is: Who would have a bigger reason to turn to hired assassins?

The cult of the Santo Niño

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo



THERE WAS AN UNUSUALLY LARGE CROWD OF people assembled at the back of the Abbey Church of Our Lady of Montserrat in Mendiola, Manila, after Masses last Sunday. I had forgotten that it was the fiesta of Santo Niño de San Beda. There was a special blessing of children in the monastery parlor and the annual amusement fair "Frolics" on the school grounds. People did not seem confused that there was not one, but two images of the Santo Niño in the church: the old one, a replica of the Infant Jesus of Prague carved by Maximo Vicente in the last century that was high up in the main altar of the church; and a new one, more accessible and encased in glass at the back that looked like a pudgy doll. Then, there was a third image inside the cloister not known to the general public. These three images in one place made me hope that Michael Tan would cast his anthropological lens on the various fiestas of the Santo Niño held in different places in the country, especially Cebu, Aklan, Tondo and Mendiola.

One wonders what kind of religiosity attracts devotees to either the Santo Niño or the Nazareno of Quiapo in January. Both are images of Christ—one as a child, the other as an adult. One is small, cute and smiling; the other large, dark and in agony. There must be a cultural, historical and anthropological reason for the different devotions, a demographic difference that determines why devotees of the Señor Nazareno de Quiapo sympathize with a suffering Christ carrying a heavy wooden cross, with a crown of thorns drawing blood from his brow. The Nazareno is a dark man dressed in a purple robe, whose shade resembles that of the liturgical vestments for Lent, a gold belt with tassels wrapped on his waist. The Santo Niño, or Holy Child, is often a Caucasian or mestizo toddler, unless it is the dark Santo Niño de Cebu, vested in an elaborate costume of red, white and gold complete with a crown on its head of curly hair, a cape and golden boots. Its right hand is often raised in a gesture of blessing while the left holds a golden orb and/or a cane of office. (How many toddlers in real life can stand up and keep still in such a costume?)

The Santo Niño has taken such a hold on the imagination and veneration of Filipinos that it has spawned various types and subtypes over the years that can be seen during exhibits and processions in January. I remember the famous *panaderia* in Malolos, Bulacan where people go for traditional *ensaimada* because an image of the Santo Niño held baking implements and stood watch between the oven and the cash register. If you go to the religious shops along Tayuman in downtown Manila, you will find Santo Niños in all shapes and sizes. Aside from the traditional costume of red and gold you can order an image in a variety of occupational uniforms: fireman, policeman, doctor, street sweeper, etc. There is even one in rubber slippers, shorts and sleeveless *sando* that was described as a *"yagit."* The Santo Niño is so much a part of Philippine life that I have actually seen families shopping in the children's clothing section of Shoe Mart with their Santo Niño in tow. Now that is definitely worth a column from Michael Tan.

Some people are partial to the Nazareno, others are attracted to the Santo Niño. A number venerate the new-born Christ Child as seen from ivory images of the Niño Dormido, or Sleeping Infant, popular in 17th and 18th century Philippines. A wonderful *dormido* in the Central Bank comes complete with an elaborate silver filigree bed that formed part of the loot that the British took when it sacked Manila in the 18th century.

Surely, the type of image one venerates says a lot about his personality, and I could not but wince at the very odd fetish of a classmate in graduate school, who is now married and teaching abroad after earning her Ph.D. While she was outwardly conservative in speech and dress, she confessed that she was attracted to images of Christ crucified, the lean male body covered with nothing but a loincloth. Am I being a prude here, or isn't that truly perverse?

The first documented image of the Santo Niño was brought to the Philippines by Ferdinand Magellan. It was of Flemish make and was given to the wife of Humabon, lord of Cebu, as a baptismal gift when she was christened Juana, after the Spanish queen who is remembered in history as "Juana la Loca" or "Joanna the Mad." Despite the massacre of the Magellan expedition on the shores of Mactan in 1521, the image of the Santo Niño survived long enough to be recovered by Miguel Lopez de Legaspi in 1565, and thus was built what is today the Cathedral of the Santo Niño de Cebu.

Around this image a wild celebration has grown, called the Sinulog, which has been copied as the Ati-atihan in Kalibo, Aklan, and even the Dinagyang in Iloilo. Since these fiestas are developing into popular tourist attractions, some people worry that we are starting to forget their religious roots and intent.

The cult of the Santo Niño definitely requires a second, closer look and should encourage some sort of reflection, both religious and cultural, because the veneration of this image and its variants says so much about us and what makes us tick.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Getting into college

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY THAT ACCOMPANY THE annual release of UP's College Admissions Test (UPCAT) is not unique to the Philippines. Several Asian countries have even more competitive college entrance systems, mainly because the best universities are operated by the state, and only a small number of students can enter these institutions.

Review classes are even more grueling than the ones we have here. From the stories I hear, they're almost like the review classes we have for the bar exams, the young students sequestered for weeks to make sure they study.

Beneath these entrance examinations is a whole philosophy of education, including the way a nation looks at a college education. In the Philippines, for example, a college education has become a kind of passport, a way to leave and work overseas, maybe not even returning. In neighboring countries, a college education is seen as a channel for social mobility and a better life for individuals, but there is also a national vision of college as a way to develop the best of the young so they can contribute to the country's development. The entrance examinations are there to help in the selection process, recognizing the limited resources available for universities.

Filipino education officials should be looking at the experiences of other countries, with their views about tertiary education, to see what we might be able to learn from them. It's also important that we understand the other systems, because our neighbors are also our competitors.

Streaming

Many countries use a "streaming" process which we might want to consider. Streaming recognizes that people will have different capabilities and interests. In China, as early as junior middle school (students between 12 and 15 years of age), educators are already looking into who might go on to college and who go into shorter vocational types of training. Streaming determines if a student will go on to college to finish a bachelor's degree in accounting or to a business school with a three-year associate degree course in book-keeping. Another example would be someone going on to college for electrical engineering while his or her classmate becomes an electrician.

Unlike the Philippines, where one ends up in shorter vocational courses mainly for lack of funds, the streaming system is based on exams and aptitude tests. If you're rich and don't have the aptitude for college, you'll still end up in the vocational-type schools. (What wealthy Asian families do is simply ship off their less bright children to the United States, where there are many universities only too willing to take them.)

Streaming considers the labor needs of a country. Note how in the Philippines everyone wants to do nursing or computer science because it's the current fad, without due consideration of whether the labor market can absorb all the graduates.

Certainly, there has been criticism raised against streaming. Streaming can discriminate against "late bloomers," young people who may actually be quite bright but whose talents may not have emerged yet. This is where American universities may have something to contribute, with schools like Harvard fine-tuning entrance examinations to go beyond the grades and exam results.

Despite some weaknesses, streaming systems can actually be more equitable, giving the poor equal opportunities with the rich for getting into, say, medical school. The entrance exams are there to detect the ones with potential for education in a state school, supported by taxpayers' money. Of course, the foundations for equity are a bit more complicated, starting with equal access to good schools as early as in the primary level, but countries that practice streaming also tend to have a more level playing field, with good quality public education at all levels.

Equal access

Streaming affects entrance exams as well. In Vietnam, for example, there are four different types of entrance exams. Those who want to go into engineering, computer science and the physical sciences take exams in mathematics, chemistry and physics. Those who want to go into the natural sciences, health or medical fields or business have to hurdle exams in mathematics, chemistry and biology. Those who want to go into the social sciences or humanities take exams in literature, history and geography. Interestingly, those who want to go into fine arts and music belong to this group and, in addition, they must audition to demonstrate they have potentials as future artists. Finally, there's the group that wants to go into foreign service; they have to take exams in literature, math and a foreign language.

It does seem futile to require a future musician to take an entrance exam that includes biology, chemistry and physics. Note that we never require music or art tests for someone who wants to do computer science or medicine. On the other hand, I do worry that entrance exams of this type still reinforce the false dichotomies of the "rational" versus the "intuitive," when in fact, we need more people who can do lateral thinking, future doctors who can appreciate the arts as well as future music composers who see the interface of mathematics and music.

Bluetooth cheating

No doubt, college entrance examinations have perhaps become too much of a pressure, especially in East Asian countries such as South Korea, Japan and China where failure can be a disgrace, sometimes even leading to suicide.

The pressure has given rise to corruption in Vietnam, where last year several students were arrested for using wired wigs and shirts, embedded with Bluetooth so the students could be coached, via cell phone. A less high-tech variation was the use of "lifebuoys," tiny pieces of paper with the answers on it sold by sidewalk vendors who also sell cigarettes and tea.

In China, there's a new twist. The move toward a market system has meant that the entrance exams, while promoting equal access, fall apart when parents cannot afford the fees. After the communists took over in 1949, university education was free for those who could pass the entrance exams. Since the mid-1980s, following market liberalization, the universities began to charge tuition and today, these fees can range from 4,000 to 6,000 yuan (about P24,000 to P36,000) a year, which is a lot of money for poorer families, especially those in rural areas.

The Chinese government is now reviewing its policies and will impose a cap on tuition fees, while offering financial assistance to poorer students. Last year, public attention on the problems of the new market-driven education system focused on the case of a student in the province of Shanxi who had been at the top of his class and who had passed the entrance examination but couldn't afford to pay the tuition. Despair led to suicide, not of the student but of his father, who was so overwhelmed by the shame of not being able to send his son to college.

Ombudsman can't fire officials

I HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT THE Office of the Ombudsman and the Department of Interior and Local Government committed grave abuse of discretion in removing several governors and mayors from their elective posts.

According to Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, he just acted on orders from the Ombudsman. If so, the Ombudsman's orders were null and void. Under Sec. 13(3), Article XI of the Constitution, the Ombudsman may only recommend, not order, a public officer's dismissal, suspension, etc. Simply stated, the Ombudsman cannot be both an investigative body (which, essentially, it is) and a judge at the same time; the latter function belongs to the Sandiganbayan.

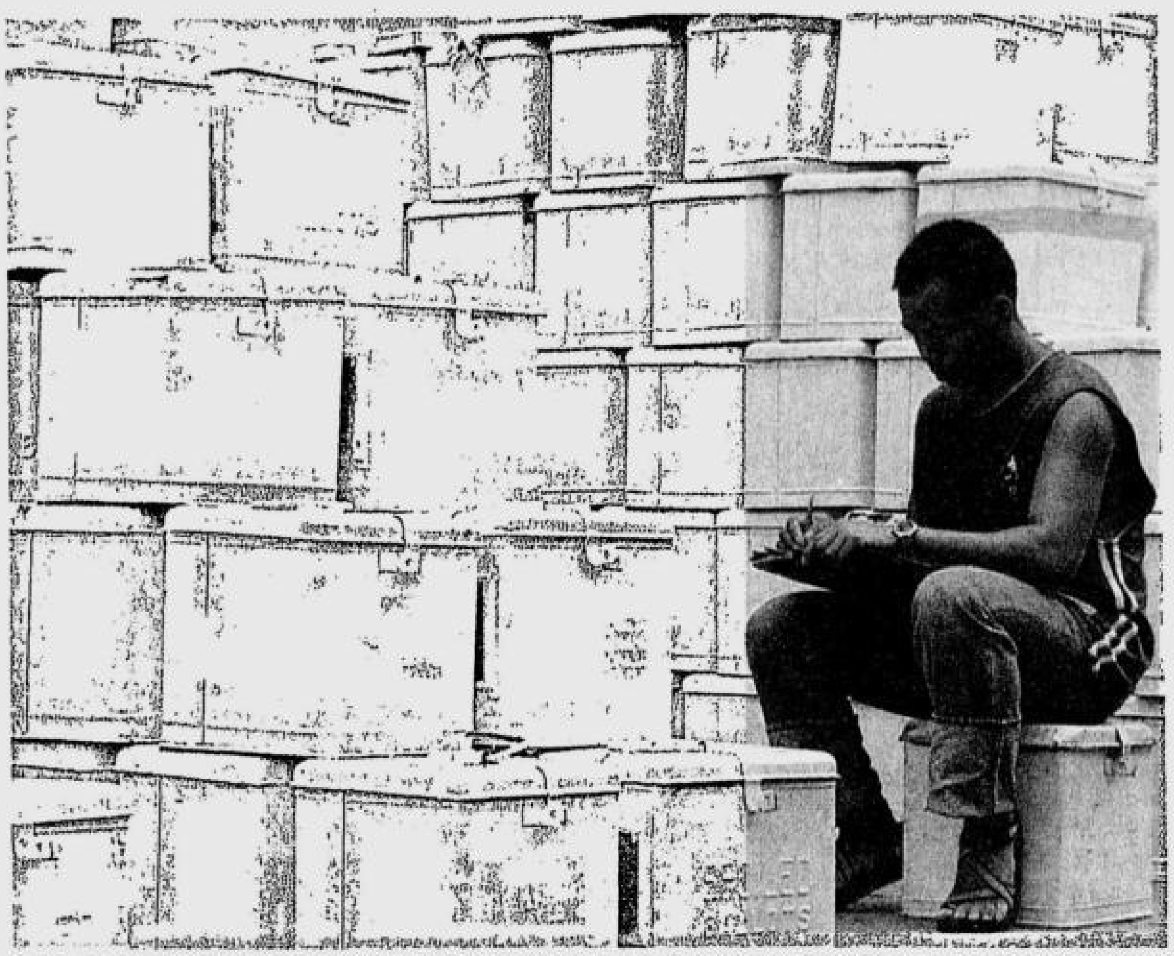
Meanwhile, there is reason to believe that the term "public official or employee"—against whom the Ombudsman may take appropriate action or censure, or whose removal he/she may recommend—does not necessarily cover elective officials. This impression should draw a rationale from the fact that the Constitution contains no provision expressly vesting in the President (hence, much less in her Cabinet secretaries, like Puno) the power to remove elective executive officials from their posts.

As things are, the only constitutionally provided mode of removing a local elective official under the Local Autonomy Code is the people's power of recall, in addition to final conviction of a crime, after due process.

The local officials whom Puno wanted removed from their posts may have indeed betrayed the people's trust by way of the charges they are accused of. But they have to be presumed innocent—hence, not punishable outright (except perhaps by preventive suspension at the very worst)—until they are finally proven guilty by the proper court.

Any other action on the part of the administration will always be deemed politically motivated, hence extremely abhorrent, especially during an election season.

—RUDY L. CORONEL,
10 Venus St.,
Golden Country Homes,
Alangilan, Batangas City



A COMELEC employee takes an inventory of ballot boxes being prepared for shipment. INQUIRER PHOTO

GSIS eCard Plus good for pensioners

WE WOULD LIKE TO TAKE EXception to two letters (PDI, 1/19/07) which alleged that the GSIS eCard Plus works against GSIS pensioners.

For so many years, pensioners suffered months of delay in receiving their checks, or mail pilferage resulting in lost checks. In addition, they had to wait for three banking days to get their checks cleared.

But with the eCard Plus, pensions are deposited directly to the pensioners' eCard Plus ATM account every first working day of the month, which they can withdraw from any of the 6,000 Bancnet, Megalink and Expressnet ATMs all over the country.

Soon, using the eCard Plus, pensioners can also carry out the annual verification process through the GSIS Wireless Automated Processing System or GW@PS kiosk, sparing them the inconvenience of traveling all the way to their GSIS servicing office.

The GSIS has come up with an uncomplicated enrollment process for the eCard Plus. Old-age and survivorship pensioners only need to bring two valid IDs to their servicing GSIS office to get their eCard Plus. This enrollment process also allows the GSIS to weed out illegitimate survivorship pension claims, benefiting the pension fund in the long run.

—ELLA E. VALENCERINA,
vice president,
Public Affairs Office,
Government Service
Insurance System,
Financial Center, Pasay City

Is ERC protecting consumers?

MAY I CALL THE ATTENTION OF everyone to the following item in the Meralco bill: metering charge. This, according to Meralco's call center, is the basic charge for meter reading. So why does the charge vary when all meters are read the same way? It is because the charge is based on per kilowatt-hour consumption, which is utterly stupid because the exerted effort for reading a meter is all the same.

I think the Energy Regulatory Commission should demand that Meralco's charge for meter reading should be the same; it should not be based on the kilowatts used.

And why does the ERC allow Meralco to charge honest consumers for pilfered electricity? It is not our problem to pay for stolen electricity. I think Meralco should rethink its billing system or it will suffer bad karma in the long run.

Same thing with the ERC. Is it protecting consumers or the electric utilities? From the looks of the billing statement's crazy charges, consumers are not well-protected.

—JENIFER AQUINO-XAVIER,
jenny_aquino1066@yahoo.com

Still praying for a sincere leader

CONRADO DE QUIROS' COLUMN titled "Six years and two days" (PDI, 1/22/07) was very well written. It told the truth. But why is it that nothing is being done by anyone? What happened to People Power? Why are the "big-name" politicians afraid of the "small" lady? Who is the power behind her?

My husband is thinking of going back to the Philippines as a retiree, but the thought of our decaying democracy, corrupt officials and inutile law enforcers makes us dread the idea. This is also the sentiment of well-to-do retired Filipino-Americans, my mom, among them. She lived and worked in New York and when she retired, she moved to California where it is warmer.

She had gone to live in the Philippines but after a few months, when she saw the predicament our country was in, she came back to the United States. "*Wala na daw pag-asang umasenso ang Pilipinas* (according to her, there is no more hope for the Philippines to progress)" if corrupt and power-hungry leaders will continue to rule it.

I hope and pray that some day in my lifetime, a new and young leader will rise and really serve the country and its citizens, and not rob them.

—ANNIE TAMPINCO,
annie_c08859@yahoo.com

Teachers deny irregularities in Legazpi polls

HAVING ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED in the electoral process in the 2004 mayoral election in Legazpi City, we would like to clarify certain misimpressions that might have been created by Neal Cruz's column titled, "Is SC sitting on election case in Legazpi?" (PDI, 1/22/07)

To give the public a clearer picture of what happens in a precinct during an election, watchers from rival parties surround the Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs) from the time the votes are cast up to the submission of all election results and paraphernalia to the Commission on Elections office and the City Treasurer's Office.

Aside from the watchers, other representatives from non-political groups, the Namfrel and PPCRV included, are present to witness the voting and counting. All incidents are duly recorded in the Minutes of Voting (MV). With this kind of scenario, no teacher will be able to perform illegal actions or irregularities just to favor a particular candidate.

And so we, the teachers of Legazpi City, attest to the accuracy and validity of the election returns and MVs that we prepared and submitted to the Comelec on May 15, 2004. The MVs were duly certified by all the watchers and parties present in the elections, including the PPCRV/Namfrel. Based on these documents, Mayor Noel E. Rosal got 44,792 votes as against Michael Imperial's 33,747 votes.

But what surprised us was that during the examination of the contested ballots, the Comelec Second Division allegedly found out that these were apparently written by one or two persons. However, the ballots that were counted by the division were obviously tampered with as they did not bear our real signatures as members of the BEI. This prompted us to file an affidavit with the Comelec Second Division questioning the spurious signatures on the documents, but it never gave us, some 110 teachers, a chance to be heard.

We stand tall and upright knowing that we have never tainted our dignity and honor as members of the BEI during the May 2004 elections. We will never sacrifice our long years of dedicated public service by not fulfilling our duty in an election.

—FE D. DOLOT,
president, Legazpi City Public
School Teachers and Employees
Association, Legazpi City

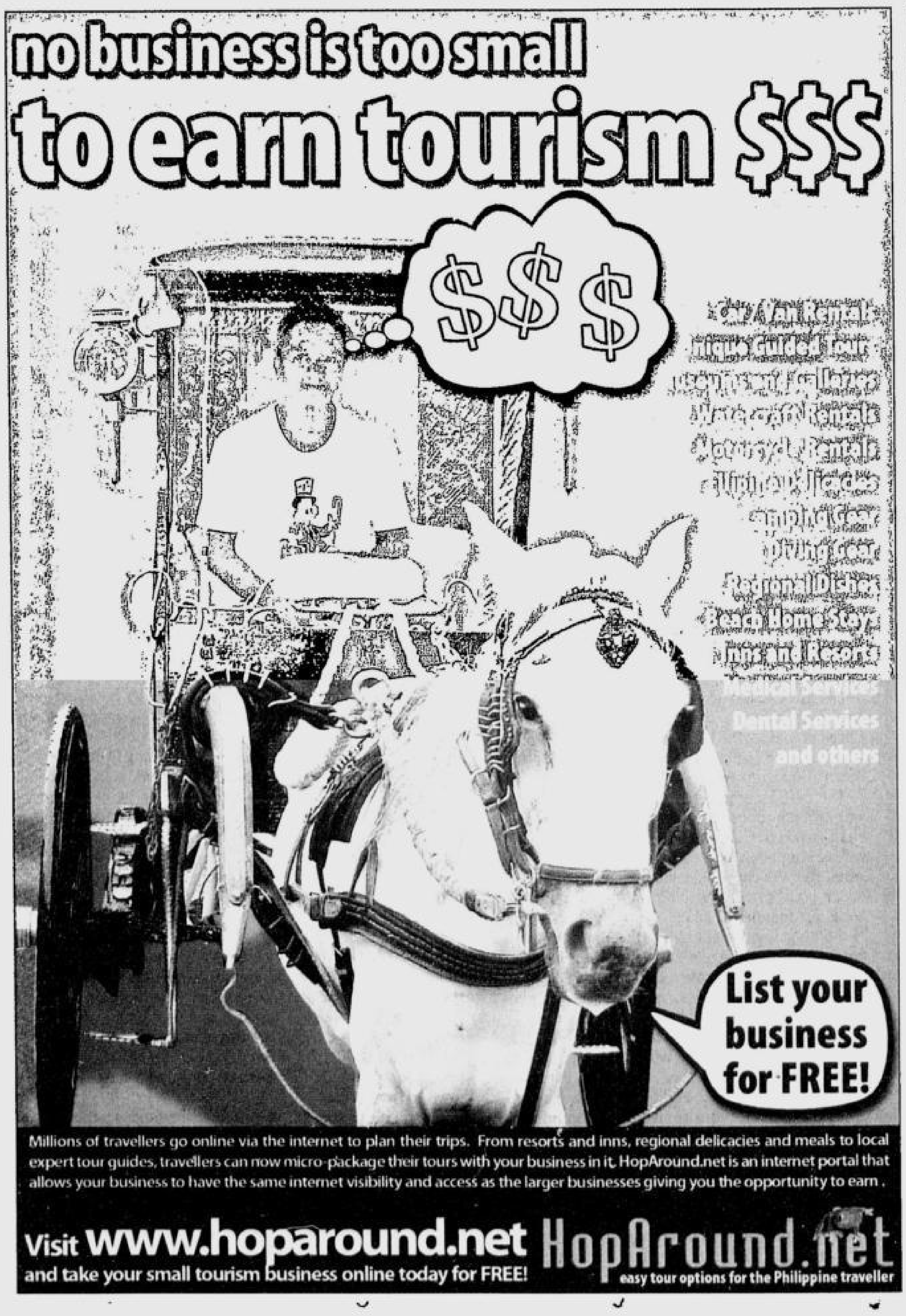
Transfer of Smith to US Embassy allowed by VFA

I AM IN FAVOR OF LANCE CPL. Daniel Smith's transfer to the US Embassy. I was a soldier during World War II and the Americans did help in liberating us from the Japanese. We learned how good democracy is. Millions of our countrymen are now in the United States, and we are now earning good dollars—while we benefit from them.

The transfer was legal. It's very clear in the Visiting Forces Agreement. After all, the Supreme Court will decide.

I am now 80 years old and I did experience most of everything in this world—and it's great to be still around and enjoy the good things in life. I have become a US citizen. I pray to the Lord to give me more years—God bless the Philippines.

—PEDRO ABLAN,
Colora, Maryland, USA



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Visit www.hoparound.net
and take your small tourism business online today for FREE!

HopAround.net
easy tour options for the Philippine traveller

Where have donations to Bicol victims gone?

I VISITED BICOL LAST DEC. 23 AND SAW the devastation. Before that, there were so many donations pouring in for my fellow Bicolanos from overseas, including some from Canada. As I saw the most devastated towns, particularly Padang and Guinobatan, I began to wonder where all the dollar donations went.

There were hundreds of lives lost. With just the $1 million that Canada sent, the people who lost homes should have new houses standing by now. Is anybody wondering where the money went, or is this the work of the same corrupt government I witnessed before and which prompted me to leave the Philippines?

The people of Guinobatan are still trying to rebuild without aid from the government. People are borrowing money to rebuild their lives. Others can only pray that it won't rain tomorrow, for fear of another lahar flow. Some places don't even have rice.

We have been having fund drives here to bring funds directly to the people, because the local governments are corrupt—a reflection of the national leadership that we have.

Bayanihan is something all of us should rekindle. It is a very positive trait that we have lost.—**Teresa Ala, Alberta, Canada (via e-mail)**

* * *

Filipinos are proud of their English language skills. But it's not the be-all and end-all of gaining competitive advantage in the labor pool, especially in light of the fact that there are more prized skills now, like quantitative skills, computer skills, science skills, etc.

Most Filipinos who go to US universities are in business courses (like me) or in liberal arts. Very few are in the sciences and engineering.

In contrast, Indians take science and engineering. That is why, after they graduate, they earn much, much more than Filipinos.

Even in business process outsourcing, we are losing ground, especially in the higher-end jobs. The jobs that get outsourced to Filipinos are customer service, accounting, payroll and data-entry. In India and China, the jobs that go to their people are programming, research, drug-testing, etc., which pay more.

INQUIRER.NET VOICES

The question is, are there more and more Filipinos who are going into the sciences and engineering? It is not whether they can speak English.—**Geraldine Zingapan, New York (via e-mail)**

* * *

I have read that another actor—and in my opinion, another very "winnable," incompetent senator-to-be—will run in the coming elections. It makes me feel lucky that I have left the country, because I know that with the kind of public officials we have, doom is the only possible scenario.

I pity my countrymen, though. Their ignorance about the roles of public officials being taken advantage of. The worst part is that even the educated and intelligent Filipinos are supporting incompetent candidates.—**Ces Galicia-Alvero, Bakersfield, California (via e-mail)**

* * *

It seems to me that political candidates should answer issues that boil down to two questions: 1. Who are you? 2. What do you stand for? In the absence of substantive answers to these questions, I don't think the electorate should vote for any candidate.—**Fiordelis Tanchoco, Pacifica, California (via e-mail)**

* * *

If it is true that Richard Gomez is running for a Senate seat and he wins, then I might say we will really have a colorful Senate with all those celebrities in it. I wonder if Regal Films or Viva Productions will do the coverage of the Senate in the near future.—**Augusto Cruz, Cainta, Rizal (via e-mail)**

* * *

Again, the Catholic Church vows to make sure that the elections will be clean and honest. To Church leaders, clean and honest elections are those won by candidates they endorse and support. It has always been that way and it will always be that way for as long as the Catholic Church interferes in politics.—**Bernie Torres, Baldwin Park, California (via e-mail)**

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Cops forced to guard Abra pols

BAGUIO CITY—THE CORDILLERA POLICE SAID Abra politicians are pressuring policemen assigned in their towns to serve their needs, including performing personal security duties.

The regional police removed 26 of these policemen last month as a result, according to a press statement issued by Senior Supt. Joseph Adnol, regional police spokesperson.

Abra has been placed under special police supervision since 2005, after a government fact-finding team discovered that violence there has been linked to local politics.

The government also removed the powers of local officials to control policemen, including Gov. Vicente Valera's. Valera was implicated in the Dec. 16 murder of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr.

But the government erred when it failed to replace the whole Abra police force that the fact-finding team recommended in 2005, said Anthony Bal-log, chief of the Department of the Interior and Local Government's capability building office here.

Bal-log was the DILG Cordillera operations officer last year who helped the fact-finding team investigate the Abra police.

"The real solution was replacing all policemen assigned there for years because their links to politicians are deeper than it appears," he said.

The fact-finding team said policemen were moonlighting as bodyguards of politicians. Former Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes replaced the entire Abra police force in 2005.

But Bal-log said many of the displaced policemen pleaded to return to their Abra assignments because of their families who had relocated there.

"That was a human issue we never considered. If we want a solution, removing them is the only option because some policemen were already bribed with special accommodations or employment by politicians," he said.

He said officials of the Philippine National Police realized that they had no funds to relocate the displaced policemen's families, so they were slowly reintegrated between 2005 and 2006.

"Only the policemen who have direct ties to politicians were replaced," he said.

Chief Supt. Raul Gonzales, Cordillera police director, said in an earlier press conference that policemen who were returned to Abra reported being pressured by local officials into resuming their bodyguard duties.

He said this was the reason the Cordillera police began reviewing the personal files of these policemen. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

EV ESPIRITU/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

CABBAGES that reach Manila each day have been burned by ice, because temperatures dropped to 5 degrees Celsius in Atok, Benguet. A common enough occurrence here, the frost destroyed P10 million worth of crops just as temperatures dropped to negative 1 degree Celsius in some parts of the province.

Frost ruins ₱10M in vegetables in subzero coldness

By Delmar Cariño
Inquirer Northern Luzon

ATOK, BENGUET—STRONG winds swept layers of frost that covered northern Benguet farms this week, but not before low temperatures destroyed P10 million worth of vegetables.

Mayor Concepcion Balao said this was the fourth time that frost hit her town in the last two months.

In Baguio City, the mercury dropped to 9 degrees Celsius on Wednesday but rose to 9.8 degrees Celsius on Thursday, according to Efren Aquino, weather observer of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) station in the city.

Farmers said that temperatures had dropped to 5 degrees Celsius here early this week, which they blamed for the frost.

Below zero

In Bauko, Mt. Province, employees of the Mount Data Hotel reported that temperatures there registered below zero.

Dolly Theodore, hotel manager, said their in-house thermometers registered a negative 1.2 degrees Celsius on Wednesday.

Residents in the town woke up to find their front yards slippery with ice, she said.

The windshields of their cars were also covered in ice, she said.

On Thursday, however, temperatures rose to 7 degrees there.

Benedicto Kibad, an aide of Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dalog, said frost normally visits Mt. Data in Bauko every three years.

Bauko farms produce potatoes and Chinese cabbage.

Pagasa is unable to verify this information because it has no weather monitoring station in the area, said Joseph Rios, chief meteorological officer of the weather station in Baguio City.

Cold spells hit Barangays Paoay, Cattubo and Abiang in Atok town as well as the farms of Buguias and Kibungan towns.

Balao said the layer of frost that covered the vegetable crops vanished when winds blew overnight.

'Andap'

Villagers here called the frost as *andap*.

Homer Teliaken, farmers' association president in Barangay Madaymen in Kibungan, said the strong winds thawed the crystallized water on vegetables.

Buguias Mayor Thomas Palileng said frost hit Barangays Sinipsip and Natubleng in his town.

"Between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m of Jan. 31, the frost was from one to one-and-a-half inches," Balao said.

She said Paoay, Cattubo and Abiang have 234 hectares of vegetable farms that produce 22 tons of potatoes, 20 tons of cabbage, 16 tons of radish, and 20 tons of carrots.

"I am afraid that around 80 to 100 hectares were damaged by the frost," she said.

But Balao warned speculators not to use the damage as an excuse to justify vegetable importation.

"The damage is manageable. We can still produce the demand needed in the market," she said.

The damage to vegetables had been estimated to reach P10 million.

Vegetable growers and farmers in the province have been protesting against the continued smuggling of vegetables in the country just as the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo tries to further open up the Philippine market to imported products.

Farmers had dumped vegetables in a rally at the home of a businessman, who was close to ousted President Joseph Estrada and is now also an ally of President Arroyo, whom they blamed for the smuggling of agriculture products into the country. *With reports from Desiree Caluza, EV Espiritu and Gobleth Moulic, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

ATTENTION:
DIABETICS

Charantia Ampalaya Tea now recognized by BFAD as suitable to diabetics

We are happy to announce that on October 30, 2006, the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) approved the reclassification of Charantia Ampalaya Tea, from Food Supplement to a higher product registration category of **Herbal Tea for Special Dietary Use of Diabetics.** We are proud that from being the first BFAD-registered Ampalaya Food Supplement and the country's leading brand in its category, **Charantia is now also the first and so far the only herbal product to receive this much-coveted BFAD approval that officially acknowledges that Charantia is suitable to diabetics.**

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FOODBIZ EXPO ACTIVITIES

FEBRUARY 8, 2007 (1st Day)

10am	Your Road Map To A Successful Business (Free) - Room A
12nn	Role Of DTI In SME Development (Free) - Room A
12nn	Food Safety & Hygiene Awareness By Mantek (Free) - Room B
12nn	Learn Hot To Make Bitso-Bitso (Plain & With Fruit Fillings) and Fritters (Free) - Food Biz Stage
1pm	Running A Meat Shop Business In Your Home (P500) - Room A
2pm	How To Start Your Business w/ P5,000 Capital (P500) Room B
5pm	Starting a Business w/ Zero Capital by John Tan of Chef's Pride

FEBRUARY 9, 2007 (2nd Day)

10am	The 7pt. Formula For Successful Foodcart Start-Up & Operations by Mark So, CEO, Businessmaker Academy (whole day, P2,500) - Rm A
10am	Chocolate Making & Molding (P600) - Room B
10am	Learn How To Decorate Cakes & Make Profit From It by Tess & Betsy Dilla of Sweet Home Bakeshop (Free) - Food Biz Stage
12nn	Learn How To Make Pizza Dough & Variety of Toppings & Pasta Recipes (Free) - Food Biz Stage
1pm	How To Start Your Business by Philippine Franchise Association (PFA) (With Fee) Tel : 6383149 - Room C
6pm	How To Start An Electronic E-Loading Biz By E-Negosyo (Free) - Room A

FEBRUARY 10, 2007 (3rd Day)

10am	How To Start & Operate A Catering Business (P500) - Room A
10am	Going Into The Dairy Business (P400) - Room B
12nn	Learn The Varieties of Rice Toppings & Barbeque Grills (Free) - Stage
1pm	How To Franchise Your Business By Philippine Franchise Association (PFA) (With Fee) Tel : 6383149 - Room C
2pm	Make Your Products Stand Out From The Shelves (The Right Packaging & Labeling For Your Food Products) (P500) - Room A
2pm	Perfection: World's Hospitality Choice by Universal Weavers Corporation (Free) - B
3pm	Wine Appreciation: With Application Of Wine To Food, Beverage Costing, Packaging For Gifts (P500) - Room B
4pm	Learn How To Make Hopia Dimsum & Barbeque Grills (Free) - Stage
5pm	Business That Fits Your Budget By JC Fran Corporation (Free) - Rm A

JR. CHEFS CONGRESS ACTIVITIES

FEBRUARY 8, 2007 (Thursday)

11am	Popular Café Menus By JM Martinez- Owner, Green Tomato
12nn	Spanish Specialty Cuisine By Miguel Alba, Owner Alba Ristorante
12nn	COMPETITION : CATERING OLYMPICS
1pm	Childrens Party Specialty Menu By Chef Mike Crisologo, Executive Chef Of Enchanted Kingdom
2pm	FORMAL OPENING
3pm	How To Operate And Manage Your Catering Business
3pm	COMPETITION : 12 EGGS

FEBRUARY 9, 2007 (Friday)

10am	COMPETITION : KITCHEN DASH
12nn	Techniques In Food Styling And Food Photography By Ms. Gina Navarro, Owner, Esteri's Caramel Cakes, Food Stylist Of Food Magazine, Abs-Cbn Publishing And Mark Floro Of Mark Floro's Photography
2pm	Baking Science & Putting Up Your Own Business By Ms. Emalyn Bernardo Of San Miguel Flour Mills
3pm	COMPETITION : SALAD DRESSING FLAIRTENDING
4pm	Learn The Business Of Donut Making by Rod Gaddi Of Pilmico Mauri

FEBRUARY 10, 2007 (Saturday)

10am	Banquet Event Order In The Perspective Of Banquet Operations
11am	COMPETITION : CULINARY TALENT FAIR : THE SEARCH FOR FUTURE CELEBRITY CHEFS
1pm	Culinary Demo With Plating And Food Styling By ISCAHM
2pm	COMPETITION : GO CART : MARKET BASKET COMPETITION
4pm	Home Based Business Designed For Students
5pm	AWARDING CEREMONIES

OTHER COMPETITIONS (DISPLAY CATEGORIES) :
INTIMATE TABLE SETTING FOR 2
VALENTINES CAKE (FREESTYLE - DISPLAY)

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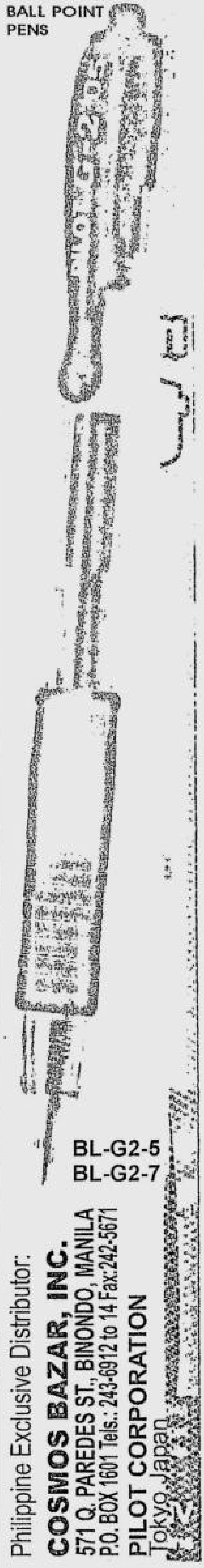

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HUMAN RIGHTS commissioner Wilhelm Soriano talks to Michael Masayes, one of the so-called "Tagaytay 5" as he visits the five farmers accused of rebellion and are now detained in Camp Vicente Lim in Calamba City. Soriano said the detainees were being kept in inhuman conditions in the jail. Soriano made an unannounced visit to the jail.

MARLON RAMOS/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

CHR exec says 5 farmers held in Tagaytay abducted

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—AN official of the Commission on Human Rights on Thursday said the five Tagaytay City farmers suspected of being communist rebels were "abducted" and not arrested as police claimed.

Likewise, officials of the Calabarzon police may face direct contempt charges after the CHR found them keeping the farmers under "inhuman prison conditions."

During an unannounced visit at their detention cell in this camp, CHR Commissioner Wilhelm Soriano said results of an investigation showed that the prisoners, collectively known as the "Tagaytay 5," were taken by police and military agents without any warrants of arrest and other legal documents.

The five are Aries Sarmiento, Axel Pinpin, Rico Ybañez, Michael Masayes and Riel Custodio.

"Our initial investigation showed that they were abducted. That's a violation (of human rights). The officers arrested the five without warrants. But if the police can show that they are really rebels, that will correct the warrantless arrest," he told the INQUIRER.

Soriano said he was surprised that despite an earlier ruling of Judge Edwin Larida of the Tagaytay Regional Trial Court, the Calabarzon police continued to disregard their constitutional rights.

He noted that after nine months in captivity, the five had been refused of their right to sunning. Prisoners, regardless of the crime they allegedly committed, should be given ample time everyday to go out of their cells and expose themselves to sunlight, he said.

Inhuman jail conditions

"They (police) must understand that human bodies need the rays of the sun. As custodians, they should comply with the standards," he said.

The five were arrested by members of the Philippine National Police and the Naval intelligence units in Tagaytay on April 28, 2006, for allegedly plotting to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo through violence.

After being held in police custody for several days, they were presented to media in Camp Crame on May 1 as alleged members of the New People's Army (NPA) who planned terrorist attacks during the Labor Day celebration.

Police subsequently filed the rebellion charges. The farmers have denied that they are NPA members.

Soriano noticed that the 30-square-meter cell of the detainees was just too small to hold them and that it was way below international jail standards.

"This jail is simply inhuman. This is just for temporary detention only. It's not suited for a prolonged detention," he said.

Soriano instructed CHR lawyer Dexter Calizar to file a direct contempt case against the leadership of the Calabarzon police and to ask the court to immediately order the transfer of the five inmates to a better jail facility inside the camp.

"I was told that there are three or four other jail facilities inside this camp. Maybe we can transfer them to one of those where the prisoners can be better off," he said.

The jail does not have a visiting area where the detainees and their visitors could freely talk, he said. Thus, the five have been denied of their rights to unhampered access to their counsels, he added.

Soriano said the commission would request Judge Larida to personally visit the camp so he could assess the conditions of the prisoners.

Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan Jr., Calabarzon police chief, said he would study the comments of the CHR before making any statements.

"But that's the best we have right now," he said, referring to the cell. "We have no other jail facility inside the camp. We are just complying with the court which gave us the custody over them."

Upset

After receiving complaints that the five have been refused treatment of their medical needs, Soriano brought along two doctors from the CHR.

He was visibly upset when his staff told him that one of the guards informed them that the detainees could not take them outside their cell even for a few minutes to have their medical checkup.

Soriano was forced to talk with the detainees for three hours while standing outside the cell.

A police official, who asked not to be identified for fear of being berated by his superior, said Senior Supt. Aaron Fidel, chief of staff of the Calabarzon police, instructed them not to allow the CHR doctors to see the inmates without presenting any court order.

"But the Constitution guarantees unhampered access of the CHR to jail facilities. How can we check on them if they are not allowed to go out of their cell?" he lamented.

A television crew of ABS-CBN and other members of the media were at first barred from going near the cell.

When the policemen eventually allowed them to interview the inmates, they also let the five step out to seek medical attention from the CHR doctors.

Pleased

Relatives of the detainees said they were pleased with the visit of the CHR.

"I hope the concerned government officials will know the real situation our loved are made to suffer," said Cesaria Magnaye, mother of one of the Tagaytay 5.

"What pains us more is the fact that my son was jailed for a crime he did not commit," she added.

Michael Masayes' wife Sheryll said she was hoping that the findings of the CHR would result in the immediate release of her husband.

Since her husband's arrest, she said, she was forced to beg for financial help from relatives.

She said their daughters, aged 4 and 3, are also missing the care of their father.

Aries Sarmiento said the detainees were happy with the concern that the CHR showed. Despite their repeated requests for medical attention, the Calabarzon police continued to reject them, he said.

Lighted bulb means shabu available in raided drug den

URDANETA CITY—A LIGHT BULB FRAMED BY a wooden box atop a mango tree is a signal that shabu dealers in Barangay Camantiles here have available supplies, police officials said.

The signal light is turned on when there is supply of the illegal drugs, and is turned off when there is none, Supt. Paquito Navarrete, city police chief, said.

The police discovered the scheme during a raid on houses suspected to be selling shabu here. They had arrest warrants for six suspected shabu dealers in the village.

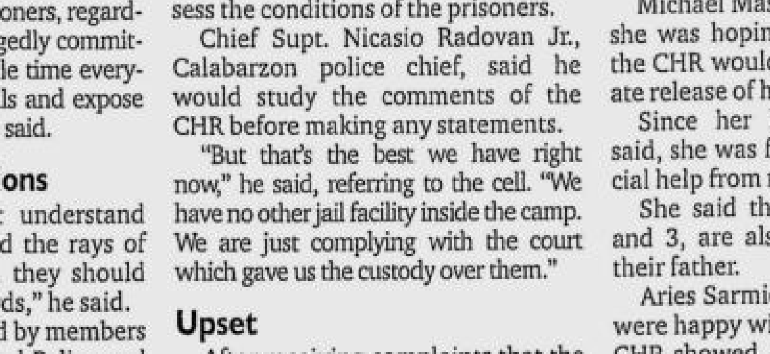
"On the first day that the raid was conducted, we thought the light was merely to illuminate the road, but a resident told us (that it's being used) as a signal light," Navarrete said.

The police later found out that the extension wire of the light was connected to a house of a couple who they wanted to arrest but who were out during the raid.

The police filed cases of violation of illegal drug use against 10 persons, eight of whom were found inside the house of the couple and two others in another house.

Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, regional police director, met with representatives of the village on Thursday, telling them to police their ranks against unscrupulous villagers. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Delays hound Subic-Clark road project



BARRICADES block the construction of portions of the SCTEx, a major component of President Macapagal-Arroyo's super region program in Central Luzon.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—While officials of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) were convinced they had settled right-of-way problems in the 92-km Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway project, the project faces another round of delay after landowners put up fences and barricades to demand compensation.

The landowners, represented by former Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority chair Felicito Payumo, said the BCDA has not paid a single centavo for the road project's right of way since the start of the project two years ago.

"We're back to square one. Landowners have been deprived of payment and no assurance was given when they can be paid," Payumo said in a press statement.

Payumo, who owns land on the path of the project, blamed the poor dissemination of information within the BCDA organization.

He said even BCDA chair, retired Gen. Narciso Abaya, was probably unaware of the problem because he had not lifted a finger to resolve the impasse.

"Knock, knock. Is anybody home? Is there anybody calling the shots at the BCDA?" Payumo said.

The BCDA has also yet to resolve right-of-way issues in Pampanga and Tarlac that recently stirred doubts over the agency's capability to meet the target completion of the 92-km expressway by the end of this year.

But earlier, Abaya said he saw no more delay in the construction because a local court handling the expropriation case was expected to issue the BCDA a writ of possession of the property in the first week of this month.

"We've solved a major problem," he told the INQUIRER in an earlier interview.

He said the court last week decided in favor of the BCDA after Finance Secretary Margarito Teves issued a directive to the Bureau of Internal Revenue to revert to the old rate.

The 8,000-square meter property was initially valued at P1,000 per sq m. The price, however, increased and this made President Macapagal-Arroyo angry during her visit here on July 13 last year.

The government could have paid P80 million to landowners if the new rate prevailed, Abaya said.

He said Teves also ordered the regional BIR office to explain the sharp valuation increase on the land covered by that part of the 94-km SCTEx.

As of Jan. 17, the project is 59.27 percent finished and the two Japanese contractors—Kajima-Obayashi-JFE Engineering-Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Joint Venture and the Hazama-Taisei-Nippon Steel Joint Venture—are "pressured" to get past the 8-percent delay in work schedule, Abaya said. *With a report from Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

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Bombing in Metro foiled; 1 Moro killed, 3 others captured

From page A1

area and were the objects of a police manhunt.

Recovered from the houses were various bomb-making materials, including blasting caps, cell phone triggering devices, circuits, timing devices, C4 explosives, tools, fuses and cords, and a Thompson submachine gun. "With the materials here, they can make a very powerful bomb," Dolina said.

Bombing target

Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Calderon said that Sandiali Utto had been involved in previous bombings in Mindanao. "Their arrest is proof that Metro Manila is a target," Calderon told reporters.

He added that the bomb components were similar to those recovered from terrorist suspects in Mindanao.

Dolina said the raid was the result of a two-week surveillance of Mohammad Utto, who reportedly left Maguindanao two months ago.

"We have received information that they were trying to make a bomb. For what target, we still don't know yet. We monitored them because according to intelligence reports they were planning something. That's why we launched this police action to negate whatever they were planning," Dolina said.

He described the suspects as "well-trained in bomb-making" and were also "guns for hire." He said the group used to provide shelter for Abu Sayyaf guerrillas transiting from Mindanao to Metro Manila.

Asked if the arrested men were planning an attack similar to the Valentine's Day bombings in the cities of Makati, General Santos and Davao in 2005, Dolina said, "It's a possibility, but the investigation is still going on and we cannot really say now what their real intention is."

2005 attacks

Seven people were killed in the Feb. 14, 2005, bombings and 150 others were wounded. Three of the fatalities were in Makati. Then Abu Sayyaf spokesperson Abu Sulaiman, who was killed this month, said that the bombings were the ASG's "Valentine's gift" to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

On Oct. 28, 2005, Indonesian Rohmat and Filipinos Gamal Baharan and Angelo Trinidad were sentenced to death by a Makati court for murder and multiple frustrated murder in connection with the bombings.

"Our informants tipped us off about the presence of suspected bombers in the area," Navy Vice Adm. Rogelio Calunsag said of yesterday's Taytay operation carried out at 4:30 a.m. "We may have foiled attacks in the capital."

MILF denial

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, denied that Sandiali Utto and his men were MILF members. "They are bandits and police linked them to our organization. We have no active members in Rizal," Kabalu said in an interview with a local radio station.

"We are saddened because all incidents happening in the country are being blamed on us. We want Dolina to prove his allegation," he said.

Security forces have scored a major victory against the Abu Sayyaf, killing its chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani last September, and his presumed successor Abu Sulaiman earlier this month on Jolo island.

The Abu Sayyaf is notorious for ransom kidnappings and has been linked to several deadly attacks in the Philippines, including a 2004 bombing that gutted a ferry, killing 116 people.

A military report said the deaths of Janjalani and Abu Sulaiman have isolated the group from its foreign backers and severely impaired its ability to carry out terror attacks. The report warned that the group may be forced to resort to banditry for survival.

Military 'asset' executed

Also yesterday, the military said that in Midsayap, North Cotabato, a man suspected of being a military asset who was allegedly seized by MILF rebels, was executed and buried in a shallow grave, the military said.

Col. Julieto Ando, spokesperson for the 6th Infantry Division, said the remains of Ontong Abdullah, 39, were buried by MILF guerrillas in a shallow grave in Barangay Lumupog, a few kilometers from Barangay Kapinpilan where he was seized on Tuesday. *With reports from Jeoffrey Maitem and Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao, AP, Reuters, Inquirer Research*

Khalifa held office with Libyan in Malate

From page A1

group had received funds from two men close to Bin Laden.

Janjalani said his group received P6 million from Khalifa and Yousef in exchange for sending volunteers to Afghanistan.

Khalifa, in a letter to the INQUIRER published on Saturday, denied giving money to the Abu Sayyaf.

Former workers of Bin Laden's Saudi Arabia-based construction company said that Bin Laden, by recruiting workers abroad, must have preplanned the deployment of Islamist militants of different nationalities to aid the mujahideen (soldiers of religion) in Afghanistan then fighting a Marxist government.

Being rich, Bin Laden did not have to rely on IRRO resources for his own recruitment of fighters for the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Study group

Bin Laden had become the common thread between Khalifa and terrorism.

Yousef was said to have created his own network among young Muslim students he would frequently meet as a "study group."

Yousef is a nephew of Khalid Sheik Mohammed, the alleged chief architect of the al-Qaida terrorist network and alleged mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Yousef was convicted by a US federal court as a mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

He fled the United States after the World Trade Center bombing.

Police said Yousef was also behind the plot to bomb US-bound flights from East Asia over a 48-hour period. The plot was discovered in January 1995 when a fire broke out in the apartment shared by Yousef and Abdul Murad.

Yousef was arrested in February 1995 in Islamabad, Pakistan, and returned to New York.

Scholarship in Libya

It was Yousef who recommended Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, elder brother of Khadaffy, to the IIRO study grant program, giving him a slot in a two-year program on Islamic da'wah (lay preaching) in Libya in 1989, according to sources.

Khadaffy became the Abu Sayyaf chief after his brother died. He was killed in September last year in Sulu in an attack by a team of soldiers.

The IRRO's two-year scholarship given to the elder Janjalani allowed Yousef to drag Khalifa's name into terrorism, the sources said.

Nom de guerre

When Janjalani came home in 1993, his nom de guerre, Abu Sayyaf, was introduced as the bogeyman of modern-day extremism by an Islamic professor from the University of the Philippines in a lengthy Philippine News Agency dispatch.

For its operations in the country, the IRRO received funding support from the Libyan organization, later known to its beneficiaries in the Philippines as the Muammar Ghaddafy Foundation, the sources said.

Offered the Ghaddafy scholarship program were Filipino Muslims and non-Muslims of socialist political persuasion, among them, members of the Moro National Liberation Front, students, activists, critics and writers.

One beneficiary said the Libyan government had hoped to breed broad-based social advocacy to free that country from the UN economic sanctions.

Of the several Moros who were alumni of the da'wah training in Libya, three were interviewed for this story. Only Janjalani among the alumni who came home became an extremist, the INQUIRER learned.

Junie Arances, who was recruited into the Afghan war, identified four other Moro militants who had fought the Russians with him.

Gov't crackdown

Neither Janjalani nor any of his known Abu Sayyaf companions were among them.

Arances, a Muslim convert from Bukidnon, had been offered a four-year language program at the Imam Saud University in Saudi Arabia in 1984.

Another scholarship beneficiary, who asked not to be identified, said his schooling abroad did not change him.

Resources dwindled and IRRO projects deteriorated as the Philippine government cracked down on the group's connections, including those in Pangasinan.

Because of the crackdown, no organization, local or foreign, has continued giving funds for the maintenance of IRRO projects and salaries of the staff.

As a result, the projects, probably meant to be noble, could fail or, worse, become a burden to its beneficiaries. *Inquirer Mindanao*

Aging Japanese men learn to love wives

From page A1

"For about a year now, I've been starting to help out with the housework," Fukatsu said. "I can't stay at my company forever. I have to return home. But right now, I don't feel like I have a place there."

Last year, a new group for men called the Japan Adoring Husbands Association designated Jan. 31 as a day for husbands to return home at the unusually early hour of 8 p.m., look into their wife's eyes and say, "Thank you."

Companies first

The movement, though small—about 230 people have posted messages on the group's Web page about this year's event—represents quite a change for a generation of Japanese men taught to consider their companies first and their wives much later.

On Wednesday, the village where the association is based held a renewal of vows ceremony for a local 50-something couple and handed out prizes to three men as the best "doting husbands"—before sending them home to spend some quality time with their beloved.

The reasons for the movement are many.

This year, the first of Japan's postwar baby boom generation will reach 60 and retire, meaning an unprecedented number of men will have to abandon their home-away-from-home—the all-consuming office—and spend more time with their spouses.

There are financial reasons as well. An impending law change that gives housewives a bigger share of their spouse's pension could trigger a surge in divorces among older couples, as women frustrated with years of neglect take the money and run.

Tough times

These are tough times for Japanese marriages.

Japan's divorce rate is a relatively low 2.08 per 1,000 couples, but the number of splits has increased more than 60 percent since 1985 to 261,917 in 2005, according to government statistics.

Older couples are prime movers in the trend. Divorce among those married for more than 20 years has grown the fastest, nearly doubling since 1985 to over 40,000 couples in 2005—with separation more likely to be initiated by women, leaving their exes to face a lonely old age in a country where the average male lifespan is over 78, one of the world's longest.

"Many older married women have built up frustration over the course of their marriage. Once children become independent and wives get more free time, they start wondering: 'Am I happy with this life?'" Atsuko Okano, a Tokyo-based divorce counselor, writes on her website.

'Repent, repent'

Adoring Husbands Association member Sadao Ito, 67, wishes he had been more sensitive to his wife's feelings. She left him seven years ago, just as he was facing retirement from a busy office job in the northern city of Sendai.

"She took care of me so well. She made me breakfast every day, and did all the housework. But I never did anything in return," he said.

Ito now acts as a volunteer adviser to the association, which was founded in 2005 in Tsumagoi village, north of Tokyo. He often gives the local chapter's 20 members advice on how to avoid his mistakes.

"Repent, repent, repent. That's what I do every day," Ito said in a phone interview. "My wife didn't take a single family album with her. I realized then that I had driven her away."

5 golden rules

The association offers five golden rules for a happy marriage, such as asking about a spouse's day, expressing gratitude as often as possible and "swallowing your embarrassment and pride." The group held "Beloved Wives Day" last year for members, but opened it this year to a nationwide audience for the first time.

Tsumagoi village, whose name sounds like the words "wife love" in Japanese, has also recently started to market itself as a romantic destination for married couples.

Last year, it invited couples to an event called "Shout Your Love from the Middle of a Cabbage Patch"—where husbands took turns hollering romantic messages against a backdrop of Tsumagoi's wide-open fields. About 100 people turned up.

For the 1st time

That was where the soon-to-retire Fukatsu said "I love you" to his wife—for the first time. The father of two daughters still living at home practiced for the big moment by repeating the phrase 20 times.

"I had never told Setsuko I love her—not like that. But now I want to say it more often ... It feels nice," he said.

Setsuko Fukatsu appreciates the new attention.

"In the end, the children will leave and have their own families, so the two of us need to live a happy and a healthy life together," she said. "And I'm sure my husband will help me out with that." AP

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Ebdane loses cool on first day at DND

From page A1

scandal in 2005 in which military personnel were alleged to have been used to rig the 2004 presidential election.

Cruz resigned last Nov. 30 in disagreement with Malacañang's Charter change campaign.

In his acceptance speech at yesterday's turnover ceremony in Camp Aguinaldo, Ebdane reiterated policy pronouncements that the military should be insulated from partisan activities during the elections.

But minutes later at a press briefing, he said troops could be used to transport election materials—one of the prohibitions laid down in the MOA.

"On the forthcoming elections and the role of the [Armed Forces of the Philippines], we have to insulate the AFP from partisan activities. The [MOA] with the Commission on Elections is very clear about the duties and responsibilities of the soldier," Ebdane said in his speech, without acknowledging Cruz as the author of the agreement.

He also said troops would be made to attend seminars "to ensure that every soldier knows exactly what is required of him during the election period."

'What's your problem?'

"Now what we have is [an MOA] ... but remember, it is always the Comelec who has the final say," Ebdane told reporters later.

"Like, for example, the transfer of the ballots from one province to another. They need the planes. So it is not included in the prohibition," he said.

When a reporter asked how allowing soldiers to transport election materials would affect the objective of insulating the military from politics, Ebdane's face darkened.

"What's your problem?" he asked the reporter. "What's wrong if the Comelec will request the Air Force to transport the ballots from Luzon to Mindanao?"

He said that the MOA was "flexible," and that if the AFP chief of staff or any other official would "see fit [to have it] further defined, the better, so as to ... isolate the individual personnel from unnecessarily being used in partisan activities."

Prohibitions

The MOA, copies of which were distributed to the media months ago, states that:

- The Comelec's deputization of AFP units "shall not in any case include [the] transporting of ballots, other election paraphernalia, and election results."
- Soldiers, subject to the approval of the AFP chief of staff, can only go as far as to "provide air, land and naval vessel escorts to the transportation facilities used in transporting election paraphernalia" when police personnel cannot address the security threat.
- The military cannot "make available certain AFP facilities such as land, sea and air transportation, communication systems and other equipment" for the elections.

The MOA specifically bars the Comelec from tapping the military for the counting and canvassing of votes and clustering of polling precincts, and bars the use of military camps as canvassing sites.

Soldiers also can no longer be tapped to provide security to candidates, Comelec personnel and others performing election duties, as well as polling places and members of the Boards of Election Inspectors.

Troops can only be deputized by the Comelec to secure areas under "serious armed threat," to man checkpoints, and to enforce the gun ban.

'Read it yourselves'

"Why don't you get hold of the MOA and read it yourselves," a scowling Ebdane told reporters.

He turned to AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., who had signed the agreement along with other top military officials and Comelec commissioners, for comments.

Esperon then told reporters: "We will be allowed to transport as escorts, but the vehicles will primarily be not the AFP's. But if there is no other transport equipment that can be used, then it would be up to the Comelec to make the order."

Esperon said that the MOA was "not being changed," and that in some remote areas, military vehicles might be the only available means of transport.

"We intend to work by the spirit of the MOA. We want to go by that because we don't want to be misconstrued as acting partisan in this election," he said.

4 generals in Garci tape

During the 2004 elections, soldiers were allowed to act as security escorts of Comelec personnel, transport election materials, and even canvass the votes inside military camps.

Four generals, including Esperon, as well as Ebdane, who was the Philippine National Police chief at the time, and his successor Arturo Lomibao, were implicated in the election fraud scandal.

Their names were mentioned in the taped conversations between President Macapagal-Arroyo and then Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano at the height of the vote canvass.

An AFP fact-finding panel cleared the four generals and the rest of the military officials implicated, however. The PNP did not investigate Ebdane, Lomibao, or any PNP personnel.

Neither Ebdane nor Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who presided over yesterday's turnover ceremony, made mention of Cruz and the programs he started, including the pioneering Philippine Defense Reform.

Ebdane attributed the reforms undertaken in the DND purely to the President, who held the defense portfolio for two months.

AFP involvement

Two party-list lawmakers—Anak Mindanao Rep. Mujiv Hataman and Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran—were quick to take Ebdane to task for his remark that soldiers might be tapped to transport election materials during the May polls.

"That's inconsistent with the new policy of the administration to insulate the AFP from politics," Hataman told the INQUIRER.

Hataman said that only two days ago, Esperon even insisted that the military would not take part in any election-related activity.

"Why is Ebdane changing the rules now?" he said.

Beltran said that by his remarks, Ebdane appeared to be pushing for the military's "greater involvement in the May elections."

"Two days into his job and Ebdane is already seeking to overwrite and circumvent a memo that was lauded by many who support clean and violence-free elections. His push for military involvement in the transport or delivery of election paraphernalia is most suspect, and it should be nipped in the bud," Beltran said.

He called on Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos to "stick strictly to the letter and spirit of the MOA."

Revisit killings

At Camp Aguinaldo, Ebdane offered no policy statement on allegations that military personnel were behind cases involving the killing of journalists and leftist activists.

He instead asked PNP Task Force Usig to "revisit" all 115 cases of extrajudicial killings that it had investigated, "to identify the perpetrators."

Ebdane said the President had ordered such a review of the cases, "including possible assistance from other interested parties."

He echoed the President's response to the report submitted by the Melo Commission, which she had formed to look into the killings.

Ms Arroyo had instructed the commission chaired by retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo to continue its work. She had also ordered the DND to coordinate with the Department of Justice and the Commission on Human Rights to create a fact-finding body to "dig deeper" into the involvement of military personnel in the killings.

The military denies involvement in the murders that have drawn international condemnation.

But in an interview last week, Melo said the commission held retired Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and some military commanders accountable on the principle of command responsibility.

In response, Esperon admitted that a handful of military personnel were involved in the killings.

But he said the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, as well as politicians' hired guns, were also responsible.

Soldiers' rights

Ebdane said seminars on human rights would be conducted for soldiers to make them aware of "the obligations that go with the performance of their official duties."

He immediately added that soldiers "must also know [their] own human rights."

HOT SEAT: New defense chief Ebdane doesn't look quite at ease as he holds his first press conference after turnover rites in Camp Aguinaldo on Thursday.

EDWIN BACASMAS

"Those who have been unnecessarily charged while in the performance of their duties should not be left on their own. Legal assistance must be provided, and I hold all commanders responsible for this," he stressed.

Ebdane later reiterated Esperon's earlier statement that the allegations against Palparan would not be investigated by the military.

"That's being handled by the Melo Commission, and it's ongoing," he said.

Give him a chance

With certain sectors expressing dismay at the appointment of a noncivilian as defense secretary, and with lawmakers saying Ebdane would find it difficult to be confirmed by the Commission on Appointments because of the "Hello Garci" scandal, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye called on critics to give the man a chance "to prove his worth."

Bunye said Malacañang believed that Ebdane would "bring solid competence and a unifying presence" to the job.

"We have a hard worker and a quiet achiever at the defense post who will push the AFP modernization agenda to the limit and match defense policy and capability with the complex security challenges facing our country," Bunye said, adding:

"We urge his detractors not to prejudge him at this point, for he has the best interest of the nation in mind." *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac and Christine O. Avendaño*

2007 PSEM Annual Convention

"Targets and Outcomes in Endocrine Practice"

Hotel Philippine Plaza • February 2-4, 2007

Messages

Warmest congratulations to the officers and members of the Philippine Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism on the occasion of your 2007 Annual Convention!

As your theme " Targets and Outcomes in Endocrine Practice" implies, medical practitioners whether2 specialists or non-specialists will truly appreciate the impact of learning the latest trends in the management of endocrine diseases commonly encountered in their everyday practice. Likewise, your continuing effort to uplift the research milieu for your fellows-in-training is truly commendable.

I wish you success in this worthy undertaking and in your future endeavors.

RENE I JUANEZZA, MD, FPCP
President
Philippine College of Physicians

With great pleasure, I thank you all for sharing with us another milestone in the history of the Philippine Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism.

The 2007 PSEM Annual Convention with the theme " TARGETS AND OUTCOMES IN ENDOCRINE PRACTICE" is not only an expression of the society's COMMITMENT to provide quality education and research but more importantly is the humble reflection of the utmost desire of each of the members of the organizing committee to provide excellent endocrine care to all Filipino people through education. Indeed, our scientific chair, Dr. Josephine Carlos- Raboca, has meticulously prepared a scientific program that will answer the needs of every Filipino doctors in their everyday clinical encounters of common and not so common endocrine diseases. Our invited local and foreign experts will undoubtedly provide the necessary updates we need to face the many new endocrinological challenges of the world.

Aside from the excellent scientific program for our intellectual satisfaction, I encourage you all to join us in our fellowship, which promises to provide us an opportunity to form and renew old acquaintances.

Colleagues, I wish you all a truly enriching and enjoyable conference!

ROSA ALLYN G. SY MD, FPCP, FPSEM
Over-all Chair, 2007 PSEM Annual Convention
President
Philippine Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism

Metabolic disorders are the scourge of modernization with looming pandemics of diabetes mellitus, obesity and metabolic syndrome. Cognizant of their effect on the nation's health, developed and developing nations like the Philippines are now linking arms with international health bodies in formulating health policies and education measures to curb these lifestyle diseases.

The Philippine Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism is committed to its important role of contributing to endocrine health care through its various programs. The major scientific activity in 2007 will be the annual PSEM Convention which will precede the AOTA meeting on thyroid disorders. The theme for the PSEM convention is "Targets and Outcomes in Endocrine Practice" and will focus on evolving therapeutic targets that can determine and modulate clinical outcomes.

The Scientific Committee has carefully prepared a program that offers plenary lectures on diabetes, metabolic syndrome, dyslipidemia and osteoporosis; concurrent symposia on reproductive health, calcium disorders, diabetes and obesity; interactive meet the expert sessions on actual clinical cases ; and research presentations.

With a rich diversity of topics to choose from and a cast of highly respected lecturers, this meeting is truly a great opportunity of learning for everyone

JOSEPHINE CARLOS-RABOCA, MD, FPCP,FPSEM
Chair, Scientific Committee
Vice President
Philippine Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism

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• PROGRAM •

PRE-CONVENTION - FEBRUARY 2, 2007 (FRIDAY)

13:00 Pre-Congress: Industry Sponsored Satellite Symposia
"Different Dimensions in Diabetes"
Registration

	Mindanao Room	*Visayas Room*
16:00 – 17:00	Bayer Schering Pharma "Testosterone Therapy for Hypogonadism in Diabetic Patient" ; Speaker : Dr. Mary Anne Lim-Abrahan	Abbott – Pharma "Optimal Combination Antihypertensive Therapy for Glycemic Control in Metabolic Syndrome: STAR Trial" Speakers: Dr. Loewe Go Dr. Laura Trajano-Acampado
17: 00 – 18:00	Novartis "The Road Ahead: Expanding Treatment Options for Hypertension and Diabetes" Speakers: Dr. Froilan De Leon Dr. Cynthia Halili-Manabat	Abbott – Nutritional
18:00 – 20:00	DINNER SYMPOSIUM (GSK) "Slowing Disease Progression: Latest Advances in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Management" Speaker: Peter J. Grant MBChB, MD, Bristol, FRCP *(Luzon))*	

DAY 1- FEBRUARY 3, 2007 (SATURDAY)

6:30 Breakfast Symposium (*Mindanao Room*) Roche
7:00 Registration
8:00 Opening Ceremonies (Mindanao *Room*)
8:30 - 9:15 Plenary Lecture 1 (*Grand Plaza Ballroom)*
Chair: Dr. Rolando L. Jardeleza
Diabetes Mellitus: Current and Future
Speaker: **Prof. Stephen Twigg**
9: 15 - 10:00 Plenary Lecture 2 *(Grand Plaza Ballroom)*
Chair: Dr. Thelma D. Crisostomo
New Targets and Cardiovascular Outcomes in Lipid Disorders
Speaker: **Dr. Ruby T. Go**
10:00 - 10:30 Exhibit Opening
Coffee Break
10:30 - 12:00 Simultaneous Sessions

	Symposium I *(Luzon Room)* Pathogenesis, Complications and Treatment of Diabetes Mellitus Chair **Dr. Jubilia Araceli Balderas - De Guzman**	**Symposium 2** *(Mindanao Room))* Reproductive Endocrinology Chair: **Dr. Arlene Gaña**
10:30 - 11:00	**Mitochondrial Dysfunction in Diabetes Mellitus** Speaker: **Dr. Elizabeth Paz-Pacheco**	**Polycystic Ovarian Disease/ Evaluation & Treatment** Speaker. **Dr. Eileen Manalo**
11:00 - 11:30	**Fatty Liver and Diabetes** Speaker: **Dr. Roberto C. Mirasol**	**Androgen Treatment in Men & Women** Speaker: **Dr. Joselynna Añel-Quimpo**
11:30 - 12:00	**Diabetes in the Young** Speaker: **Dr. Rosa Allyn G. Sy**	**Hyperprolactinemia: When to Treat?** Speaker: **Dr. Antonietta S. Sison**

Lunch Symposia

12:00 - 14:00	Pfizer Exubera: Overcoming Barriers to Insulin Therapy *(Luzon Room)*	Pfizer Obesity and Diabetes: A Global Epidemic (Visayas Room)	Pfizer Atorvastatin Landmarks: A Decade of Unmatched Evidence (Mindanao Room)	Pfizer Achieving Goal Blood Pressure: The Measure that Matters (Romblon/ Mindoro)

Meet the Experts

14:00 -15:30	*Luzon Room*	*Visayas Room*	*Mindanao Room*	*Romblon / Mindoro*
	Adrenal (Conns, Pheochromocytoma) Moderator: Dr. Carolyn Narvacan-Montano Speakers: Dr. Leilani B. Mercado-Asis Dr. Agnes Mejia	Pituitary (Approach to Sellar Mass, Acromegaly) Moderator: Dr. Bien J.Matawaran Speakers: Dr. Veronica Racho Dr. Eduardo Mercado	Sodium and Potassium Electrolyte Disorders Moderator: Dr. Aimee Andag-Silva Speakers: Dr Lynn Gomez Dr. Sjoberg A. Kho	Nutritional Support and Management of Hyperglycemia in Hospitalized Patients Moderator: Dr. Nemencio A.Nicodemus Jr. Speakers: Dr. Patricia B. Gatbonton Dr. Gabriel V. Jasul, Jr.

15:30 - 15:45 Coffee Break

Research

15:45 -16:30	Poster Presentation *Foyer*	PSEM Research Award (Protocol Proposal) *Luzon Room*	PSEM Research Award (Completed Papers) *Mindanao Room*	Research Critical Appraisal *Visayas Room*	Research on Molecular Diabetology *Romblon/ Mindoro*

16:30 - 18:00 Business Meeting *(Luzon Room)*
19:00 - Fellowship Night *(Grand Plaza Ballroom)*

DAY 2- FEBRUARY 4, 2007 (SUNDAY)

6:45 Breakfast Symposium (*Mindanao Room)*
(Abbott- Diabetes Care Division)
Blood Glucose Monitoring: How often?
8:30 - 9:15 Plenary Lecture 3 *(Grand Plaza Ballroom)*
Chair: **Dr. Cynthia Halili-Manabat**
Update on Metabolic Syndrome
Speaker: **Professor John Ross Turtle, AO**
9:15 - 10:00 Plenary Lecture 4 *(Grand Plaza Ballroom)*
Chair: **Dr. Lina Lantion-Ang**
Treatment Strategies in Osteoporosis
Speaker: **Dr. Mary Anne Lim-Abrahan**
10:00 - 10:30 Coffee Break

Simultaneous Sessions

10:30 - 12:00	**Symposium 3** *(Luzon Room)* **Calcium Disorders** Chair: Dr. Allan Chang Hyperparathyroidism Dr. Laura T. Acampado	**Symposium 4** *(Mindanao Room)* **Obesity** Chair: Dr. Cynthia Chua-Ho Virgin Coconut Oil: Does it Have Health Benefits? Dr. Rody Sy
	Hyrpercalcemia in Malignancy Dr. Ma. Luz Vicenta V. Guanzon	Surgical Treatment of Obesity: Metabolic Benefits and Complications Dr. Herbert Ho

Lunch Symposia

12:00 - 14:00	*Luzon Room*	*Visayas Room*	*Mindanao Room*	*Davao Room*
	Eli Lilly Prof. Stephen Twigg	MSD "New Alternatives in Diabetes Management: Speaker: Dr. Ruby T. Go	Therapharma	Sanofi-Aventis

Closing **Dr. Josephine Carlos-Raboca**
Vice President/Chair of Scientific Program
Announcement of Winners Research
Announcement of Election Results
14:00 OPENING OF AOTA

Opening of the 8th Congress of Asia-Oceania Thyroid Association (AOTA) on February 4-6, 2007 at the Hotel Philippine Plaza

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PNP launches Aussie funded explosives lab

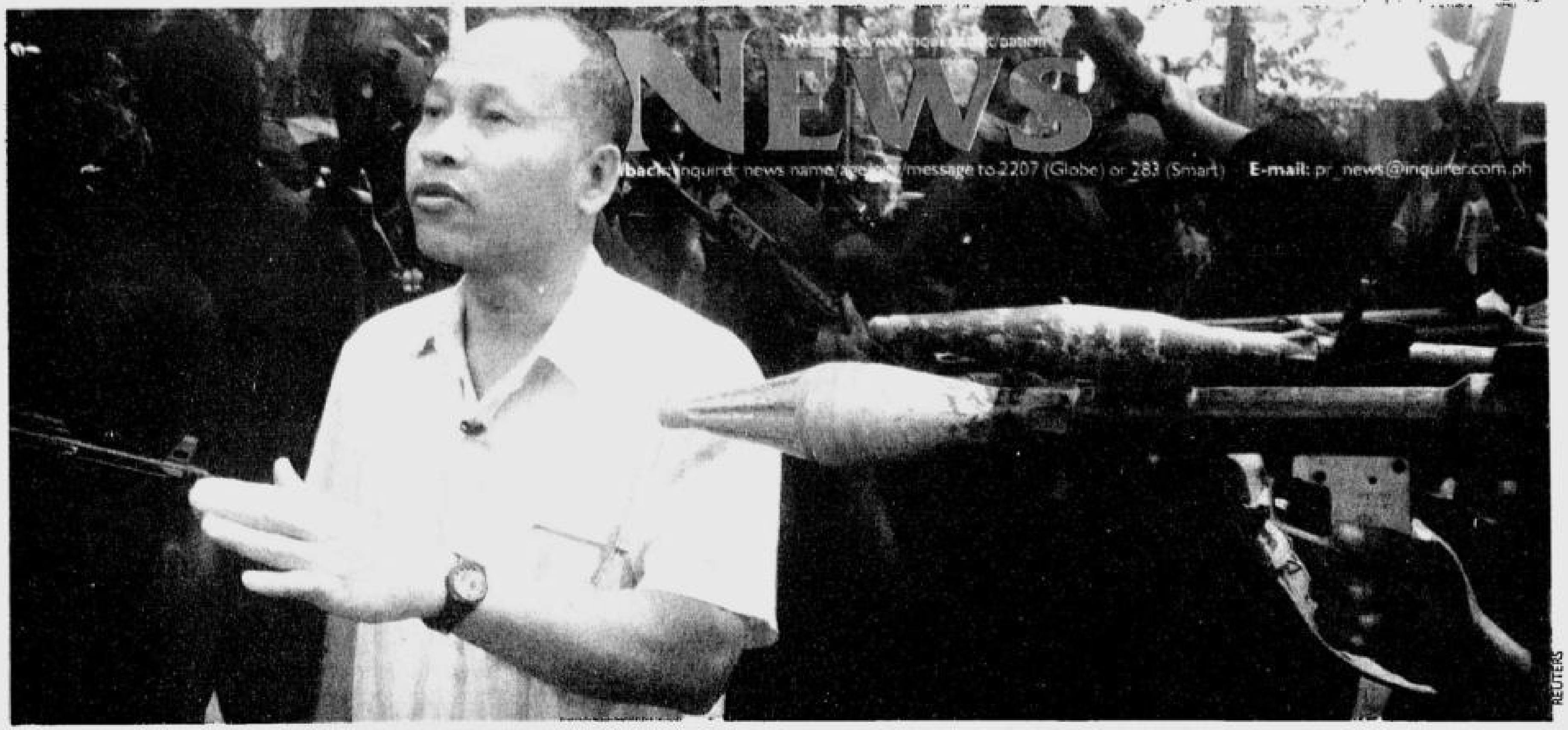
AUSTRALIAN AND PHILIPPINE OFFICIALS opened a new forensic explosives laboratory yesterday that authorities said would boost Manila's fight against terrorism and help identify bombers' "signatures."

The Philippine National Police's Forensic Explosives Laboratory, built with a A$450,000 grant from Australia, will allow investigators to conduct sensitive analysis of explosives used in bombings in the country, Australian Ambassador Tony Hely said.

"This is our contribution to the Philippine government in fighting global terrorism, a continuation and consolidation of our teamwork to fight terror," he added.

Director General Oscar Calderon, the national police chief, thanked Australia for the help.

"This new lab will enhance our capability to build airtight evidence versus captured bombers," Calderon said.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REUTERS

UNDER THE GUN. Captain Ruben Roble, one of the Filipino hostages, stands at an undisclosed place near the Niger delta Wednesday, surrounded by their captors.

24 RP hostages in Nigeria well, says negotiator

By Volt Contreras

AT LEAST TWO EYEWITNESSES HAVE SAID THAT THE 24 Filipinos being held by militants in Nigeria since Jan. 20 are in "good condition," according to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

But with no apparent breakthrough in the negotiations for the hostages' release as the crisis entered its second week, DFA officials are tempering their earlier optimism and are admitting to "a little difficulty" in dealing with the kidnappers.

"The 24 are in good condition and not as sick as previously reported by the Nigerian press," the DFA said.

It said the chief Nigerian negotiator, Ovie Omo-Agege, personally saw the hostages on Jan. 30 at the Chinoma Creek in Warri and reported to Philippine Ambassador Masaranga Umpa that the Filipinos were "still [in] good condition and looking well."

Another Nigerian—a pilot familiar with the Filipinos' vessel, the Baco Liner 2—also reported seeing the captives in good condition, the DFA added, citing an update from Umpa.

But the negotiator has had "difficulty" dealing with the abductors as they have made some "political demands" although Agege believes that "this development can be worked out," Umpa said in his report.

The kidnappers, allegedly belonging to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, are said to be demanding the release of two prisoners held by the Nigerian government on charges of treason.

DFA Undersecretary Esteban Conejos said the situation was "proving to be a little difficult because the political demands are something not in our control."

The Philippine government has asked the Nigerian government not to mount any rescue attempt that might endanger the hostages.

DFA spokesperson Ed Malaya said it was not immediately clear from Umpa's report whether the kidnappers were keeping the 24 Filipinos in two separate groups, and whether Agege and the pilot saw both or just one of the two groups.

Previous updates from Umpa indicated that 17 of the hostages were dragged to a "Camp No. 5" in Warri while the remaining seven were kept onboard their anchored cargo vessel.

Umpa also reported that a Delta State Security Council meeting was called last Wednesday, with the negotiations for the Filipino hostages topping the agenda.

The Jan. 20 incident is now the longest-running hostage crisis involving Filipino overseas workers. The DFA has recorded five such cases, including the present one, since last year. In the other four cases, the longest that it took to negotiate the release of the hostages was 11 days.

The 24 Filipinos were seized by gunmen from their Nigerian-flagged, German-owned cargo ship off the coast of the West African state.

Immediately after the abduction, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered a ban on the deployment of Filipino workers to Nigeria.

Nigeria is one of the biggest employers of Filipino workers in Africa, with some 3,900 Filipinos employed there at the end of 2006. *With AFP*

Sweden, Canada seek role in RP peace talks

SWEDEN HAS JOINED A BLOC OF NAtions backing peace talks aimed at settling a bloody Muslim rebellion in the southern Philippines, while Canada has expressed interest in following suit, officials said yesterday.

The expressions of support come despite a monthslong impasse in the Malaysian-brokered talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which has been involved in a decades-old conflict for self-rule in the southern Mindanao.

Government and rebel negotiators recently decided to accept Sweden into the International Monitoring Team, a Malaysian-led contingent that primarily safeguards a 2003 ceasefire and prevents occasional clashes from escalating and impeding the talks, presidential peace talks adviser Jesus Dureza said.

"This is like putting many umbilical cords to the peace process," Dureza told The Associated Press. "We really welcome foreign support that would help us forge a final peace agreement."

Malaysia, along with Brunei and Libya, contributes about 60 peacekeepers. Japan joined last year to provide funding for economic projects.

Sweden would like to provide humanitarian and post-conflict assistance, Dureza said.

Rebel negotiator Mohagher Iqbal said the government and the MILF have approved Sweden's entry into the monitoring group but the move has yet to be formalized it because of the current impasse in the peace talks over rebel territorial demands.

A Canadian Embassy official also met rebel leaders recently in Cotabato city to express Ottawa's desire to join the team to help improve governance in Muslim-majority areas, Iqbal said, adding Canada's application will be discussed when the talks resume.

Canadian Ambassador Peter Sutherland told reporters late Wednesday that his government wanted to help foster hope among Filipinos long entrenched in areas of conflict.

A disagreement over the size of an area where Filipino Muslims could exercise a measure of control over land, resources and governance halted the latest round of negotiations last September.

The government has submitted a proposal to break the impasse and Muslim guerrillas were studying it. Both sides could meet in an "exploratory meeting" in the near future to discuss details of the proposal, Dureza said.

The Philippine and US governments hope that an agreement with the MILF could transform its vast rural strongholds into hubs of economic growth instead of just conflict zones that could be used to harbor al-Qaida-linked militants.

Military officials have often accused the MILF of providing sanctuary to members of the Abu Sayyaf extremist group and Indonesian-based Jemaah Islamiyah. The MILF has denied any links.

The MILF, which the military says has 11,000 fighters, has been battling for self-rule for more than two decades in Mindanao, home to minority Muslims in the predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines.

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DOJ collects more evidence in Leviste case

Inspection violates client's rights–lawyer

By Leila B. Salaverria and Tarra Quismundo

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE HAS COLlected additional evidence in the homicide case against former Batangas Gov. Jose Antonio Leviste after an inspection of the crime scene.

Leviste's lawyer, Manuel Singson, however, said the unannounced inspection was a violation of his client's constitutional right. They said it was an "unwarranted and unreasonable search and seizure."

It was at Leviste's office at the LPL Towers in Makati City where the former governor's trusted aide, Rafael de las Alas, was shot dead on Jan. 12.

Among the evidence gathered were the chair where the 68-year-old De las Alas sat when he was found, and the logbook of the building, according to Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco.

Velasco, who visited the LPL Towers Wednesday afternoon, said both pieces of evidence could be presented before the court.

He said the chair had scratch marks. "Did the chair get the scratch when De las Alas tried to fire his gun, if he tried to fire his firearm?" he said.

Velasco included the logbook to see who had entered and left the building around the time when Leviste's longtime aide was supposedly killed.

Fingerprints

Makati's scene of the crime operatives (Soco) also submitted to Velasco yesterday fingerprints lifted from glasses and wine bottles in Leviste's office where De las Alas was found dead. None of the fingerprints matched De las Alas'.

Velasco said he had formed no conclusion yet about the fingerprints, but would study them in light of the statement of witness Nelia Gonzales that it was De las Alas who wanted to drink alcohol during his meeting with Leviste. The Soco members also said no clear fingerprints were found on both De las Alas' and Leviste's firearms.

They said this could be due to a person's loose grip of the gun, the rough surface of the gun, the condition of the surroundings (airconditioning could cause steel to moisten), and, possibly, the prints were wiped off.

Partiality

Protesting the inspection and the seizure of the items, Singson also charged Velasco with partiality. In a statement, Singson said Velasco was "arrogant and unethical" in conducting the reinvestigation of Leviste's case and the inspection of the building.

He said the prosecutor invaded Leviste's privacy by going through the latter's office against his will, and taking items without authority or a court order.

Singson said Velasco's behavior indicated that his office was being used, wittingly or unwittingly, for political or unjust purposes.

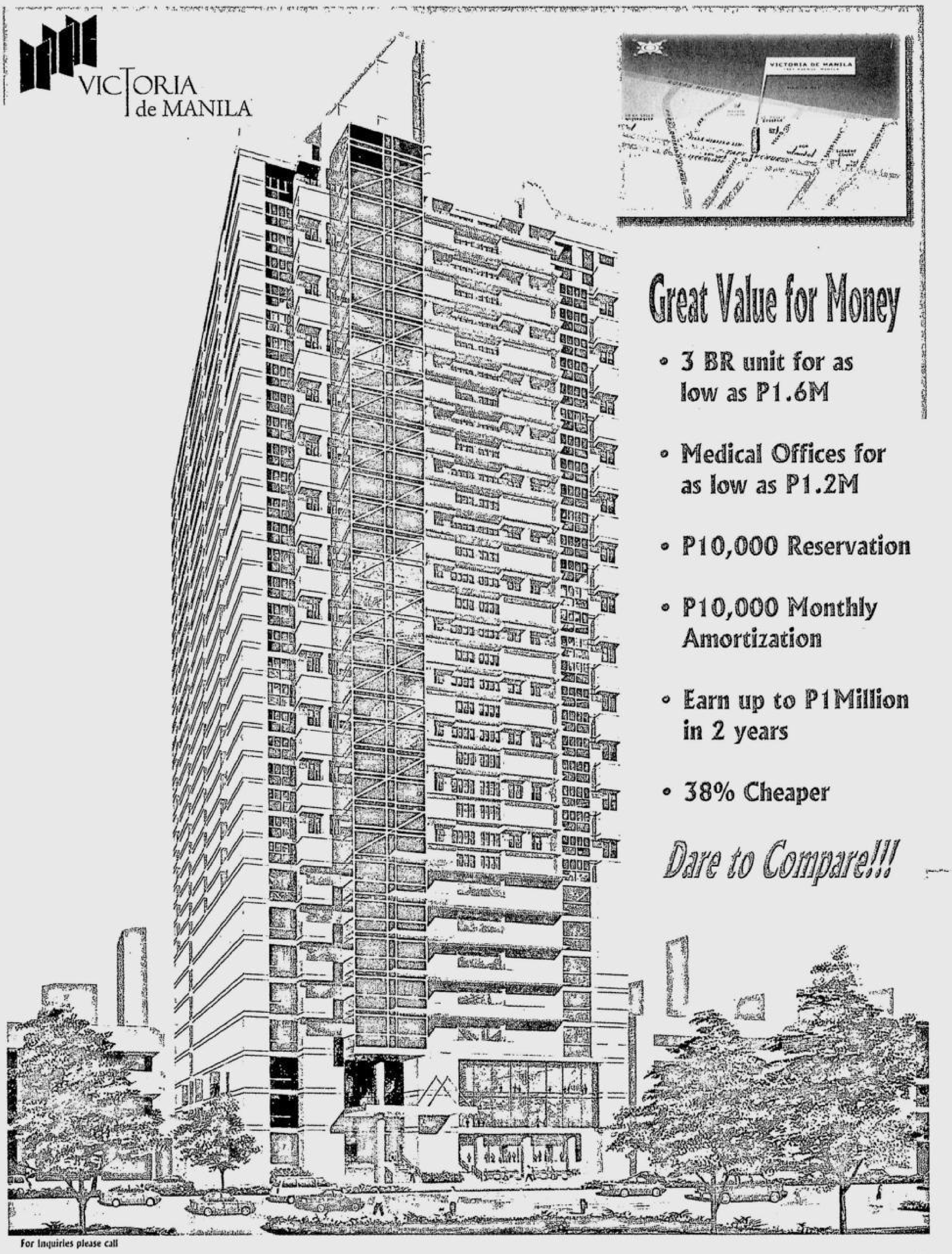
"To be sure, the act committed by prosecutor Velasco is a capricious, arbitrary and whimsical exercise of power, the very antithesis of the judicial prerogative in accordance with centuries of both civil law and common law traditions," he said.

But Velasco said, since the case was under reinvestigation, he had jurisdiction over the crime scene and had to preserve the evidence there.

He said he had not prejudged the reinvestigation.

"I dare him to produce any single proof of statement, video clip or newspaper that I pre-

DOJ/ A22



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CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION FACTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

INFANT MORTALITY

- **The infant mortality rate in the Philippines has declined from 34 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1993 to 29 deaths in 2003.** *(National Demographic and Health Survey 2003)*

- **Infant mortality correlates with the quality of maternal and child care accessible to mothers and children.** Mortality levels in urban areas are much lower than those in the rural areas. Mortality is inversely related to the mother's education level and wealth status *(National Demographic and Health Survey 2003)*

- **54% of infants in the Philippines have an elevated mortality risk due to the following factors:** The mother is too young (below age 18) or too old (age 35 and older), the birth interval is too short (less than two years) or the mother has had too many prior births (more than three) *(National Demographic and Health Survey 2003)*

- **Top 10 causes of infant mortality** *(DOH Philippine Health Statistics 2002)*

1.	Various perinatal conditions*	42.8%
2.	Pneumonia	11.4%
3.	Bacterial sepsis**	5.1%
4.	Diarrhea/ Gastroenteritis	5.1%
5.	Congenital malformation of the heart	4.7%
6.	Congenital pneumonia	3.0%
7.	Other congenital malformation	2.1%
8.	Disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight	2.1%
9.	Septicemia	1.8%
10.	Measles	1.8%

* stillbirth,asphyxia,jaundice, entangled umbilical cord etc.
**Caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi and other parasites entering the baby's body from the mother either during pregnancy, labor or delivery. Bacteria may also be transmitted through medical equipment such as catheters, IV tubes and other surgical equipment.

BREASTFEEDING RATE

- **Breastfeeding in the Philippines remains steady between 87% and 88% since 1993.** *(National Demographic and Health Survey 2003)*

- **The Philippines has a HIGHER EVER-BREASTFED RATE than the United States and selected European countries.** *(WHO Global Data Bank on Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding)*

Philippines (1998)	88%
Germany (1998)	86%
Italy (1995)	85%
Netherlands (2001)	75%
UK (2000)	69%
USA (1998)	64%
France (1998)	49%

- **The average duration of breastfeeding increased from 12 months in 1998 to 14 months in 2003.** *(National Demographic and Health Survey 2003)*

INFANT FORMULA USAGE

- **Consumption of infant formulas declined by 3%, from 12% to 9%** *(2005 AC Nielsen Retail Audit)*

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

‘Peewee reinstatement has no legal basis’

By Jocelyn R. Uy

POLICEMEN prevent supporters of dismissed Mayor Peewee Trinidad from entering the Pasay City Hall yesterday. REM ZAMORA

THE “HOMECOMING” HE HAD in mind yesterday ended in violence after the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) did not allow dismissed Pasay Mayor Wenceslao “Peewee” Trinidad to reclaim his post.

Some of Trinidad’s supporters hurled rocks, dismantled steel railings and bottles at antiriot police who prevented several city officials dismissed by the Ombudsman, along with Trinidad, from entering City Hall yesterday morning.

Several supporters, policemen and city officials were hurt in the brief riot. The police later used a water cannon to disperse the crowd, which included Trinidad, suspended Vice Mayor Antonino Calixto and eight councilors.

But before things could get worse, Virgilio Castro, assistant regional director of the DILG, delivered to Trinidad a rejoinder to his letter requesting for a “smooth turnover” of duties and functions between him and newly installed Mayor Allan Panaligan.

But Trinidad, who was suspended for allegedly approving anomalous garbage contracts, snubbed the letter.

In answer to Trinidad’s written request, G.J. Emeterio Moreno Jr., DILG director III, wrote that they could not give him “due course” because the request had no legal basis.

Trinidad earlier requested his reinstatement as mayor starting yesterday, saying the Ombudsman had reduced his suspension from six to five months.

He also insisted that the dismissal order should not be implemented while his motion for reconsideration is pending before the court.

But Moreno explained this process had already been abandoned in view of a recent amendment to the Ombudsman’s rules of procedure stating that an appeal does not stop a decision from being implemented.

“In case the penalty is suspension or removal and the respondent wins such appeal, he shall be considered as having been under preventive suspension and shall be paid the salary and such other emoluments that he did not receive by reason of the suspension or removal,” the rule stated. The amendment now provides the rule of execution pending appeal of an Ombudsman decision, Moreno pointed out.

Meanwhile, the dismissed mayor’s legal consultant, former Sen. Rene Saguisag, said the local government code does not allow the Ombudsman from suspending a local elective official.

Among Trinidad’s friends who showed up to give their support was Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay.

Prosecutors defy Gonzalez, attend Boratong hearing

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

WOMEN PUBLIC PROSECUTORS attended the hearing yesterday of the case against the alleged owner of a compound housing a multimillion shabu market in Pasig City in apparent defiance of a controversial order of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to have the hearing postponed.

But the hearing was still postponed after more than an hour of legal debate because of the absence of Raymund Fortun, lawyer of suspect Amin Imam Boratong.

Gonzalez ordered last week the five government prosecutors to seek a postponement of the hearing, saying the police witness against Boratong was not credible.

The public prosecutors showed up at the Pasig City Regional Trial Court Branch 154 ready to present two witnesses: Samir Palao and former Philippine National Police Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force Director Marcelo Ele Jr.

Asked by the court about Gonzalez’s order, public prosecutor Anjanette Ortille said they were ready to present their witnesses and they would “submit (the matter) to the discretion of the court.”

It was Boratong’s lawyer who cited the DOJ order when the defense sought the postponement of the hearing.

RTC Judge Abraham Borreta ruled that the prosecution could proceed with the presentation of their witnesses despite the DOJ order.

But he later postponed the hearing when the counsel, who temporarily replaced Fortun, said he could not adequately represent Boratong because he was not familiar with the case.

“It is the constitutional right of the accused to be represented by a counsel who can adequately represent him,” Borreta told reporters, reiterating his order announced in a packed open court.

Fortun earlier told the court, in a manifestation, that he agreed with the order of Gonzales.

He said it would give him time to undergo a medical checkup because he suspected he had a heart ailment.

Metro Manila residents assured of more water

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES Board (NWRB) increased this week the volume of water to parts of Metro Manila where supply was insufficient.

The board granted the request of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System after learning that there was more than enough water in Angat Dam to allow the increase, according to NWRB executive director Ramon B. Alikpala.

The water level in Angat, main reservoir of the National Capital Region, and parts of Bulacan, currently stands at 212 meters.

“The level (of water) at Angat Dam is unusually high at this time,” Alikpala told the INQUIRER. “The additional volume will benefit both east and west zones (of Metro Manila).”

Normally, about 42 meters of water from the dam are allocated to Metro Manila each month.

The unusually high level of water allowed the increase of the allocation by 3 meters, to 45 meters.

The additional volume means about 255 million liters of water each month.

As agreed upon with the private water concessionaires, 60 percent of the additional water would go to the west zone served by Maynilad Water Services Inc. , and the remaining 40 percent to the east zone managed by Manila Water Company Inc.

He said Maynilad had a wider service area, accounting for about 90 percent of 14-15 million consumers.

About 180,160 households served by Maynilad in the cities of Manila, Caloocan, Valenzuela, Parañaque, Las Piñas and Quezon will have stronger and longer water service supply.

Households that used to get 4-6 hours of service before will now have water for 18-24 hours.

For Manila Water, some 50,000 households in high-lying areas in Rizal will enjoy increase in water pressure, the NWRB said.

DID YOU KNOW

FEB. 2—The first labor union in the country, Union Obrera Democratica, was formed on Feb. 2, 1902 at Teatro Variedades in Sampaloc, Manila. More than 100 workers elected Isabelo de los Reyes as union president. De los Reyes later became Philippine senator.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

Cop faces raps for causing pregnant woman to lose baby

By DJ Yap

A POLICEMAN IS FACING CRIMINAL charges for allegedly causing a pregnant woman to have a miscarriage.

Jamie Tolentino has accused PO2 Marlon Pasillan and her neighbor Marivic Razalo of violating the little-known Article 257 of the Revised Penal Code. Under this provision, a person “who shall cause an abortion by violence, but unintentionally” may be held liable.

Tolentino was seven months pregnant when Pasillan allegedly threatened her with a gun. Razalo, on the other hand, reportedly gave her a tongue-lashing, causing her distress and sleepless nights. Several days later, she had a miscarriage and lost her baby.

Tolentino, a resident of Veterans Village, Barangay Pasong Tamo, Quezon City, went to the Quezon City prosecutor’s office yesterday to file criminal charges against the two.

In her complaint, Tolentino said her ordeal began on Oct. 8, 2006 inside her house at 52 Diego Silang Street. At 10:30 a.m., three police officers barged into her house demanding to see her father, Hermenegildo, she said.

Tolentino recognized one of the policemen as Pasillan of the Quezon City Talipapa Police Station. He allegedly poked her with a rifle as he asked for her father’s whereabouts. The men opened cabinets, while she sat in a corner, “frightened and traumatized.” Razalo, who accompanied the policemen, allegedly berated Tolentino over a personal matter. Pasillan allegedly continued to harass the complainant, often passing by her house, even though he was posted far from the neighborhood.

DOJ collects more evidence . . .

From page A21

judged the case. He should put up or shut up. This lawyer is such a liar. What blatant disregard of the law is he talking about? Killing a person is the blatant disregard of the law,” he said.

Another Leviste lawyer, Henry Capela, said Velasco’s surprise visit not only violated due process, but also the privacy of the building’s tenants.

The visit was part of the reinvestigation into the shooting of De las Alas. The former governor said the shooting was an act of self-defense.

Homicide charges were filed against Leviste but the court remanded the case to the Department of Justice for a reinvestigation upon the request of the victim’s family, who believed the victim was murdered.

“He (Velasco) should have followed the [legal] process. There was no order from the court. We don’t even mind that he went there as long as there was an order,” said Capela.

“This is a mere charade to support their preconceived plan of upgrading the charges to murder. They are only pretending to be going through the process. As a prosecutor, you should have the cold neutrality of a judge,” he added.

But Velasco said that with the reinvestigation, there was no need for a court order because the case was already under the DOJ.

Capela said while he and the rest of Leviste’s legal team protested the inspection, he let Velasco in to prove that “we are not hiding anything.”

Velasco and company proceeded to the room where the incident happened, recovered the chair where De las Alas was allegedly seated when shot and took pictures.

At the lobby, the prosecutor also took the security guard’s logbook.

“What happened was very wrong. It is no longer a crime scene. The offices and residents were disturbed because they (Velasco and party) were rowdy. It was like a raid was going on,” said Capela.

But Velasco said the issue was not about violating one’s right to privacy.

“Somebody was killed inside that building,” said the prosecutor. “Our concern here is to investigate an incident that has disrupted the tranquility of society, and the state has a superior right to do that,” he added.”

METROBRIEFS

Estafa rap ‘a mistake’

THE HOTEL executive arrested on Tuesday in San Juan vehemently denied his involvement in the P23 million estafa case filed against him by a real estate agent. In a statement sent to the INQUIRER, the suspect’s lawyer, Andrew Inocencio, said that linking Reynaldo Concepcion Jr., vice president of Days Hotel Phils., to the alleged sale of a lot in San Juan with a fake title was “a mistake.” Inocencio added that there is no evidence that he is guilty of a crime. Concepcion, who moonlights as a real estate agent, was arrested with his business partner Teresita Lim in an entrapment operation by the San Juan police in a fastfood restaurant while receiving P19 million from complainants Macario Ching and Lilian Yao. The suspects were released on Wednesday through an order by the public prosecutor’s office for yet another preliminary investigation, said officer on case SPO1 Leonito Iringan. “The public prosecutor’s decision to release Concepcion for further investigation will give us an opportunity to clear his name,” Inocencio said.

Emman Cena

UPHS Class ’68 reunion

UP High School Class 1968 will be holding a 39th anniversary reunion on Feb. 3 at the Albergus Restaurant, Capitol Drive, Old Balara, Q.C. Up for discussion are plans for the 2008 UPHS ’68 Grand Ruby Jubilee Reunion with classmates living abroad. Call Alma—09178345550; Cherry—09189049162; Cesar—09175294813.

Immigrants face big increases in US fees

FEDERAL IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES proposed Wednesday to raise fees for visas and citizenship documents by an average of 66 percent, promising to use the added money to modernize and speed up an antiquated, overburdened bureaucracy.

Emilio Gonzalez, director of Citizenship and Immigration Services, said the increases were necessary because the agency's fees were not covering the costs of processing more than seven million applications a year and about 135,000 security background checks a day. Since 1988, Congress has required the agency to pay for its services entirely with the fees it collects.

In exchange for higher fees, Gonzalez pledged, the agency will reduce the average time to process documents, currently about six months, 20 percent by 2009.

"I need these fees to give the service that the immigration community expects," Gonzalez said at a news conference in Washington. Since the Sept. 11 attacks, he said, the agency's costs for security measures have soared, with no new revenue to keep pace.

In an unusual convergence of views amid the polarized debate over immigration, the proposal brought outcries from groups favoring more immigration and groups that want less of it. They called the fee increases exorbitant and said Congress should appropriate money for technology and infrastructure improvements at the agency.

Fees would continue to be waived for refugees seeking asylum and for immigrants who are victims of human trafficking or sexual violence. Otherwise, the increases would vary by document, but some would be large. The fee for an application to become a citizen would rise to $595 from $330, an 80 percent increase. The cost for an employer to bring in a foreign worker would jump to $475 from $195, an increase of 144 percent. For an American who wanted to bring a foreign fiance to live in the United States, the cost would be $455, up 170 percent from $170.

Perhaps the most daunting proposed increase is for immigrants seeking to become permanent residents, whose fee would rise to $905 from $325. Immigration officials argued that the jump would not be as great as it appear, because the fee would be charged only once. Under the current system, they said, immigrants seeking resident status often have to pay interim fees while they are waiting for their application to inch through the bureaucracy, making the average cost $800. *NYT*

WORLDBRIEFS

Israel sexual misconduct

JERUSALEM—An Israeli court ruled on Wednesday that former Justice Minister Haim Ramon kissed a woman soldier against her will, convicting him of sexual misconduct in one of several scandals casting shadows on Israeli leaders. The guilty verdict was unlikely to have a direct impact on Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's political fortunes, but officials said he was expected to reshuffle his cabinet now that his Kadima party colleague would not be returning. Ramon, 56, resigned from the government in August after he was indicted. *Reuters*

Big baby in Cancun

CANCUN, MEXICO—He is called "Super Tonio," and at a whopping birth weight of 6.6 kilograms (14.5 pounds), the "little" fellow is causing a sensation in this Mexican resort city. Cancun residents have crowded the nursery ward's window to see Antonio Vasconcelos, who was born early Monday by Cesarean section at Jesus Kumate Rodriguez hospital. The baby drinks 5 ounces of milk every three hours, and measures 55 cm (22 inches) in length. "We haven't found any abnormality in the child, there are some signs of high blood sugar, and a slight blood infection, but that is being controlled so that the child can get on with his normal life in a few more days," Narciso Perez Bravo, the hospital's director, said on Wednesday. In Brazil, a baby born in January 2005 in the city of Salvador weighed 7.6 kg (16 pounds, 11 ounces) at birth. According to Guinness World Records, the heaviest baby born to a healthy mother was a boy weighing 10.2 kg (22 pounds, 8 ounces), born in Aversa, Italy in September 1955. *AP*

'Incestuous' lovers killed

LUCKNOW, INDIA—Two young lovers were bludgeoned to death and their bodies sliced into pieces and burnt in an Indian village because the community believed their relationship was incestuous, police said on Thursday. Mahesh, 20, and Guriya, his 19-year-old girlfriend and distant cousin, had fled their village near Agra in northern Uttar Pradesh state after realizing their secret relationship had been exposed. But their relatives managed to trace them, and dragged them before the village council early on Tuesday. The couple refused to end their relationship, and were killed and mutilated on the spot, police said. Arranged marriages between cousins are common in India and are not usually considered incestuous. However, young people in large parts of rural India often face dire consequences, such as losing family inheritances, if they insist on choosing their own lover instead of deferring to their family's wishes. *Reuters*

Chinese made US citizen

BEIJING—A young man believed to be the first Chinese-born soldier to die in the US-led war in Iraq has been posthumously honored as an American citizen, state press reported Thursday. Sun Ming, 20, who was a permanent resident in the United States, died on Jan. 9 while on duty in Iraq and is believed to be the first Chinese national in the US army to die in the war, said Beijing Youth Daily. He was awarded US citizenship after his death, the Legal Evening News said. He died of wounds from enemy gunfire while on combat patrol, according to US media reports *AFP*

N. Korea leader's eldest son living well in Macau casino haven for past 3 years

HONG KONG—THE ELDEST SON OF North Korea's leader Kim Jong-il has been living a low-key but well-off life in southern China's casino haven Macau for the past three years, a Hong Kong paper reported Thursday.

Kim Jong-nam, 35, and his family have made their home on the territory's leafy Coloane island, and he has been spotted dining in fine restaurants and gambling in the plush casinos, the South China Morning Post reported.

He has apparently been living untroubled despite a crackdown by the United States on the tiny city's financial links with the Pyongyang regime.

North Korea is one of the most impoverished and reclusive countries in the world and has relied on food aid for much of the past decade to feed many of its 23 million people.

At the same time it runs a nuclear weapons program that saw it test its first atomic device last October. Six-nation talks on dismantling that drive are due to resume Feb. 8 in Beijing.

"He's been on the move for much of the decade, but Macau is the place he calls home now," a source said.

"He's been free to stay as long as he lives quietly. He believes he is among friends and he appears to be happy." The Chinese foreign ministry refused comment on the case, spokesperson Jiang Yu saying only that "I have not heard of this."

However, given the sensitivities, it is highly likely that China's central government would have known of his presence in the former Portuguese colony.

Macau's long links with North Korea have been under scrutiny since one of its banks, Banco Delta Asia, was accused of laundering some of the proceeds of Pyongyang's international counterfeit operations.

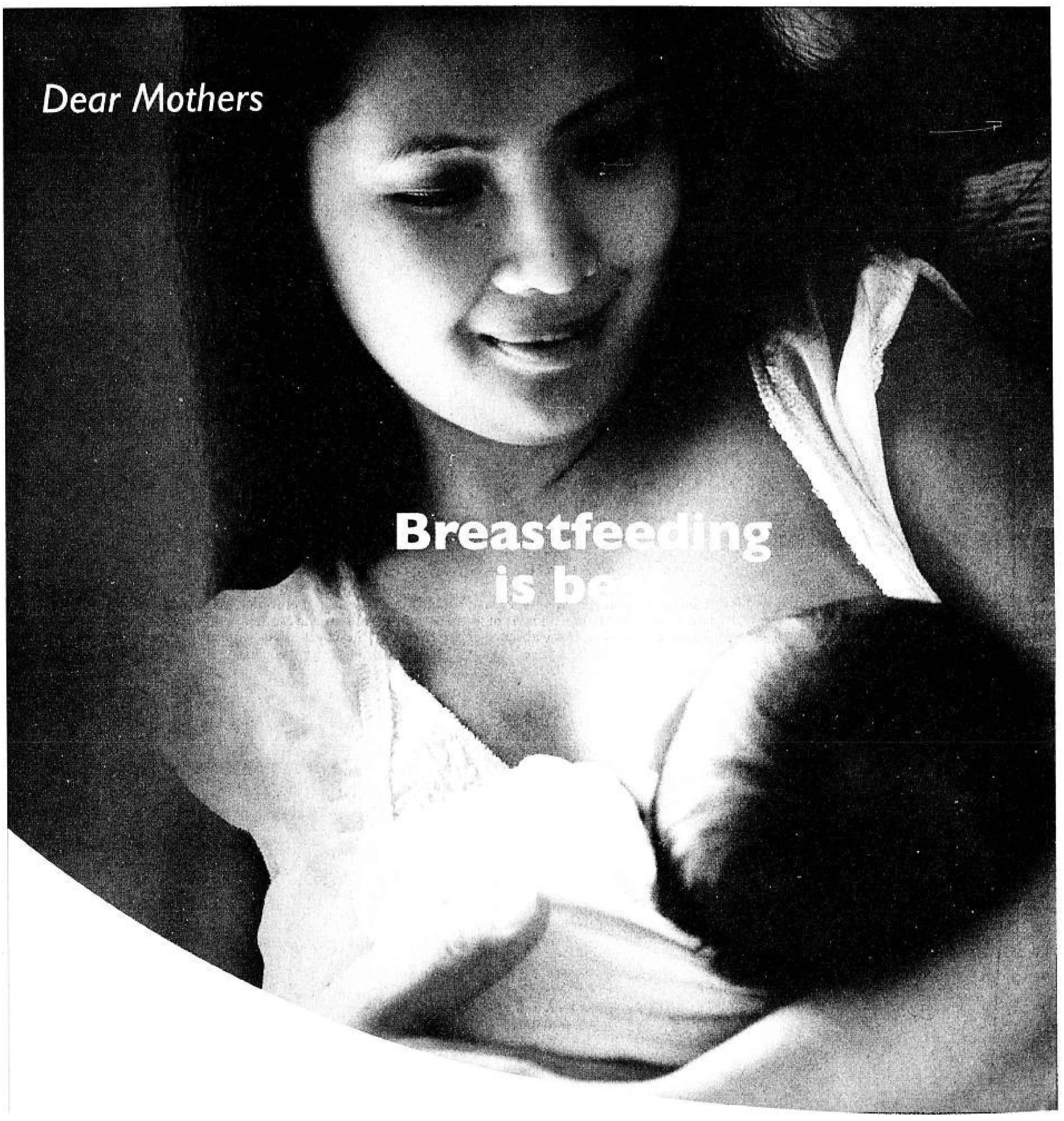
KIM JONG-NAM, eldest son of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il. REUTERS

Some $24 million of the bank's assets were frozen in late 2004 and its management placed under the control of the Macau government following the US Treasury claims.

Reports at the time linked the cash to the North's nuclear program.

The Post report, compiled after a six-week investigation, said the younger Kim travels on Dominican Republic and Portuguese passports.

He had also made regular visits to Hong Kong, some 40 km to the east, but was refused entry on his most recent trip amid international condemnation of October's weapons test, the report added. *AFP*



BREASTMILK IS THE BEST NUTRITION

Breastmilk should be a mother's first choice.

- Breastmilk has all the nutrients the child needs at the early stages of life
- It fortifies the infant's immunity against sickness and infection
- It's safe, natural and free
- It strengthens the bond between mother and baby
- Breastfeeding creates a life-long impact on a child's emotional, physical and mental development

Breastfeeding is the only natural method of infant feeding and it must be actively protected and promoted at all times.

A MOTHER'S RIGHT TO INFORMED CHOICE

While breastfeeding is the best, there are cases when a mother chooses not to, cannot continue or stops breastfeeding for the following reasons: (National Demographic and Health Survey 2003)

- She is working
- She has a breast or nipple problem
- The child refuses to breastfeed
- The child is ill
- The mother is ill due to tuberculosis, hepatitis, etc.
- Child has reached weaning age
- Mother has started on contraception
- The mother has gotten pregnant
- The mother is unable to provide enough milk

A mother who does not breastfeed has the right to full information to help her decide how to feed her child.

FACTS ON INFANT FORMULAS

The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF recognize that when mothers do not breastfeed or only do so partially, there is a legitimate market for infant formula. (International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes)

FACT # 1: SAFETY
In the 2003 Global Strategy for Infant and Young Feeding, infant formulas that are prepared in accordance with the Codex Alimentarius–a globally accepted set of standards and guidelines developed by the FAO and WHO to ensure food safety and consumer protection –are suitable breastmilk substitutes.

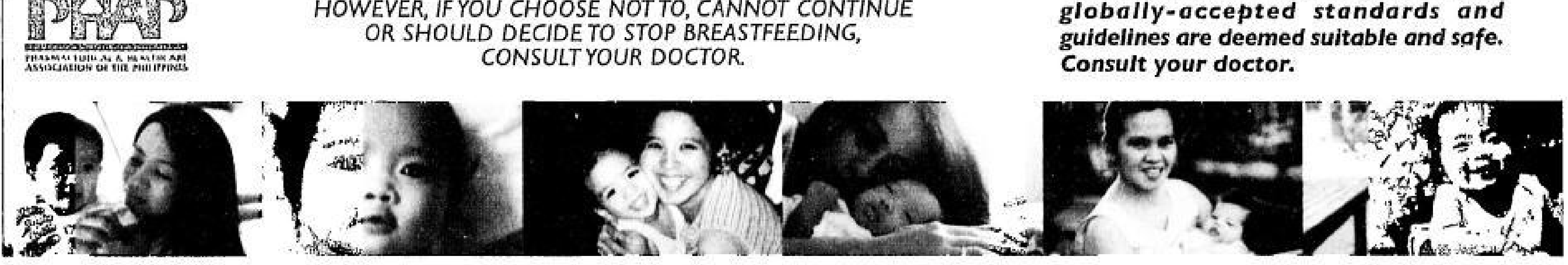
FACT # 2: BETTER ALTERNATIVE THAN CONDENSED MILK
Studies show that sweet condensed milk and rice water or "am" are not just deficient in nutrients, but may even be detrimental to the infant's health.

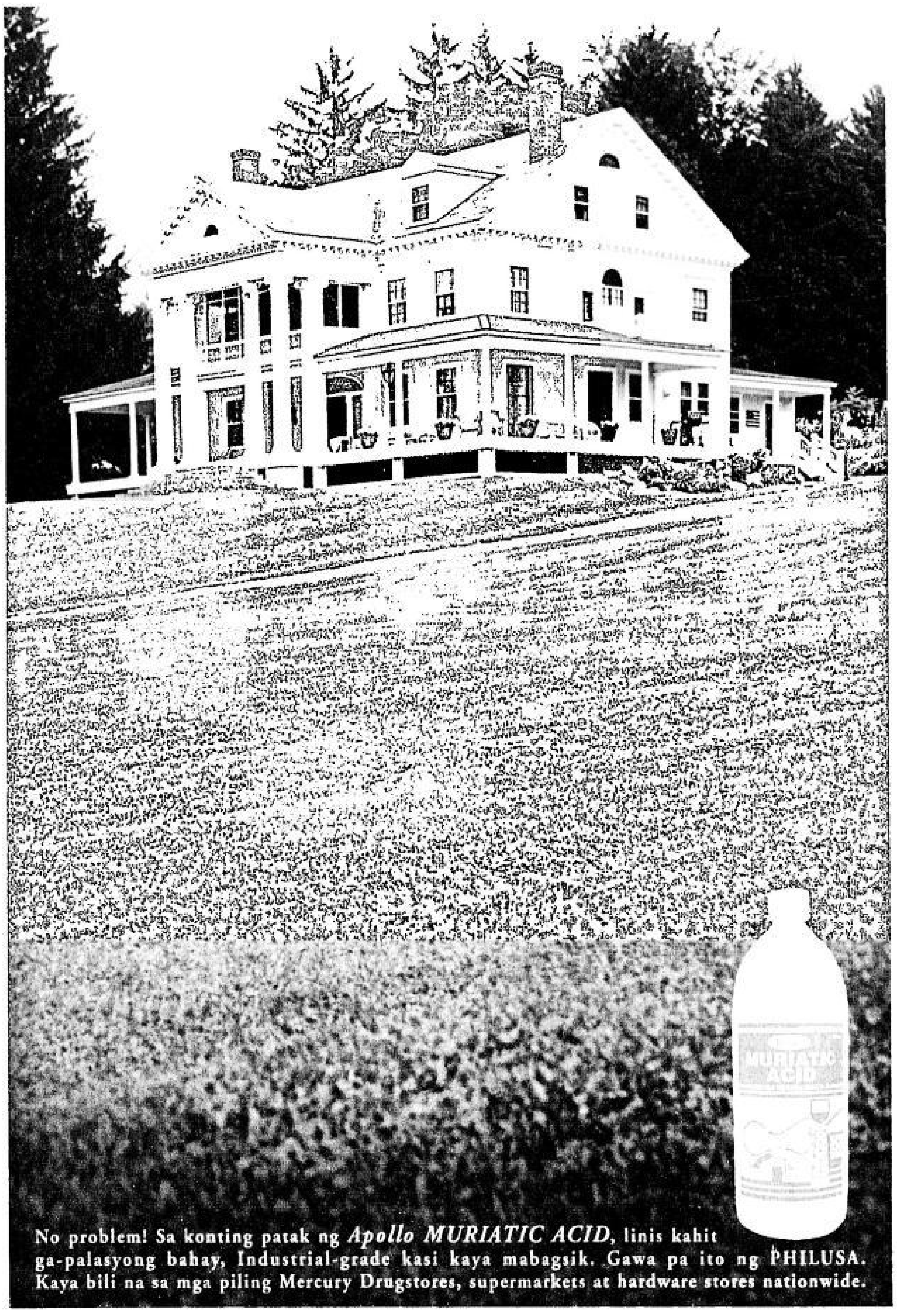
Breastfeeding is still best for babies, but when a mother chooses not to, cannot continue or stops breastfeeding, infant formulas prepared according to globally-accepted standards and guidelines are deemed suitable and safe. Consult your doctor.

WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL AND HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (PHAP), STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT BREASTFEEDING IS STILL BEST FOR BABIES.

HOWEVER, IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO, CANNOT CONTINUE OR SHOULD DECIDE TO STOP BREASTFEEDING, CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR.

PHAP
PHARMACEUTICAL & HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES





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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

US-Iran tensions can spur accidental war, analysts warn

BAGHDAD, IRAQ—CITING IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT WITH IRAQI militias and Tehran's nuclear ambitions, the Bush administration has shifted to offense in its confrontation with Iran—building up the US military in the Persian Gulf and promising more aggressive moves against Iranian operatives in Iraq and Lebanon.

The behind-the-scenes struggle between the two nations could explode into open warfare over a single misstep, analysts and US military officials warn.

Iraq has become a proxy battleground between Washington and Tehran, which is challenging—at least rhetorically—America's dominance of the Gulf. That has worried even Iraq's US-backed Shiite prime minister, who—in a reflection of Iraq's complexity—also has close ties to Iran.

Iran and the United States are already sparring on the ground.

On Jan. 20, militants kidnapped and killed four American soldiers in a raid in Karbala, and a fifth was killed in the firefight. A US defense official said one possibility under study is that Iranian agents either executed or masterminded the attack, a suspicion based on the sophisticated and unusual methods used in the attack, including weapons and uniforms that may have been American.

He spoke on condition of anonymity because the probe is ongoing.

There has been speculation that the Karbala assault may have been in retaliation for the arrest of five Iranians by US troops in northern Iraq.

Those five Iranians, who were arrested in the northern city of Irbil, included two members of an Iranian Revolutionary Guard force that provides weapons, training and other support to Shiite militants in the Middle East, US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said last week. Iraqi and Iranian officials maintain the five were diplomats.

Since the Karbala raid, US saber-rattling has intensified. President Bush said this week that US forces in Iraq would take action against Iranian operatives in the country, while insisting he had no intention of attacking Iran.

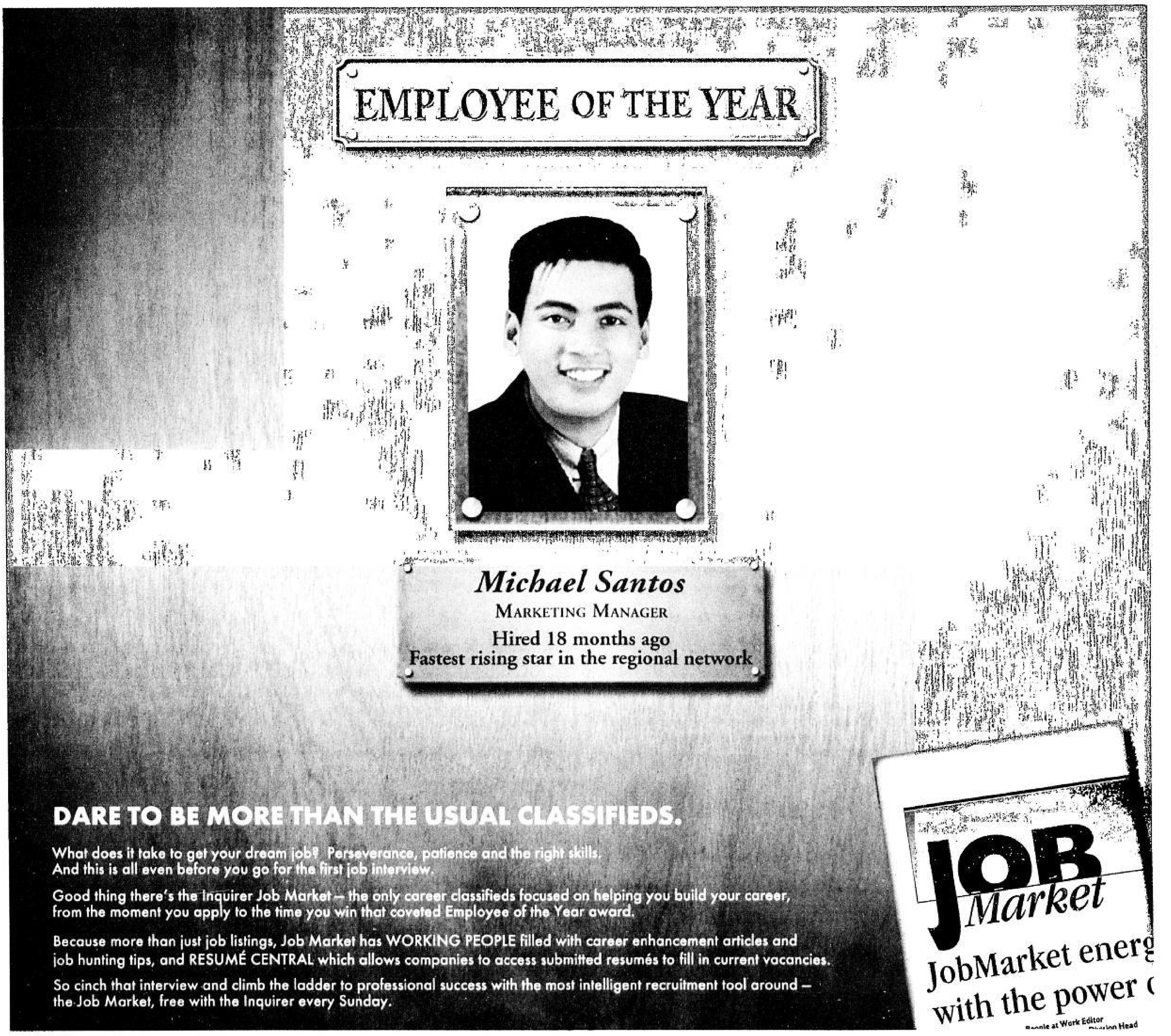
"If Iran escalates its military action in Iraq to the detriment of our troops and/or innocent Iraqi people, we will respond firmly," Bush told National Public Radio.

The US is building up its military presence in the Gulf in what it says is a show of strength directed at Iran. A second aircraft carrier is heading for the region, and Patriot missile batteries are being deployed.

Since Bush announced his new Iraq strategy in early January, Iranian officials have raised the alarm repeatedly that the US intends to attack. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran is "ready for anything" in its confrontation with the United States.

A newspaper close to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei last week threatened retaliation for any US military action—including stopping oil traffic through the Gulf's strategic Hormuz Straits and attacks on US interests.

Iran expert Ray Takeyh said the risks are all the greater because Tehran has an "unhealthy" disregard for American power, which "enhances the prospect of a miscalculation." *AP*



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WHAT'S INSIDE

7-foot-9 Chinese cager turns pro /A27

SPORTS

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Kobe shines as Lakers extend Celtics slump /A27

STEADY DOES IT: Jay Bayron chips into the 18th. ROMY HOMILLADA

Villaroman, Bayron in six-way jam at 68

By Musong R. Castillo

CARITO VILLAROMAN, A 37-YEAR-OLD with one of the soundest swings, looked primed to rejuvenate his career on the site of one of his greatest victories as an amateur.

And an ex-caddy joined him in leading the fight for national pride after the first round of the 91st Philippine Open—but it was neither Juvic

VILLAROMAN/ A27

RP Open scores and pairings on A27

METRO

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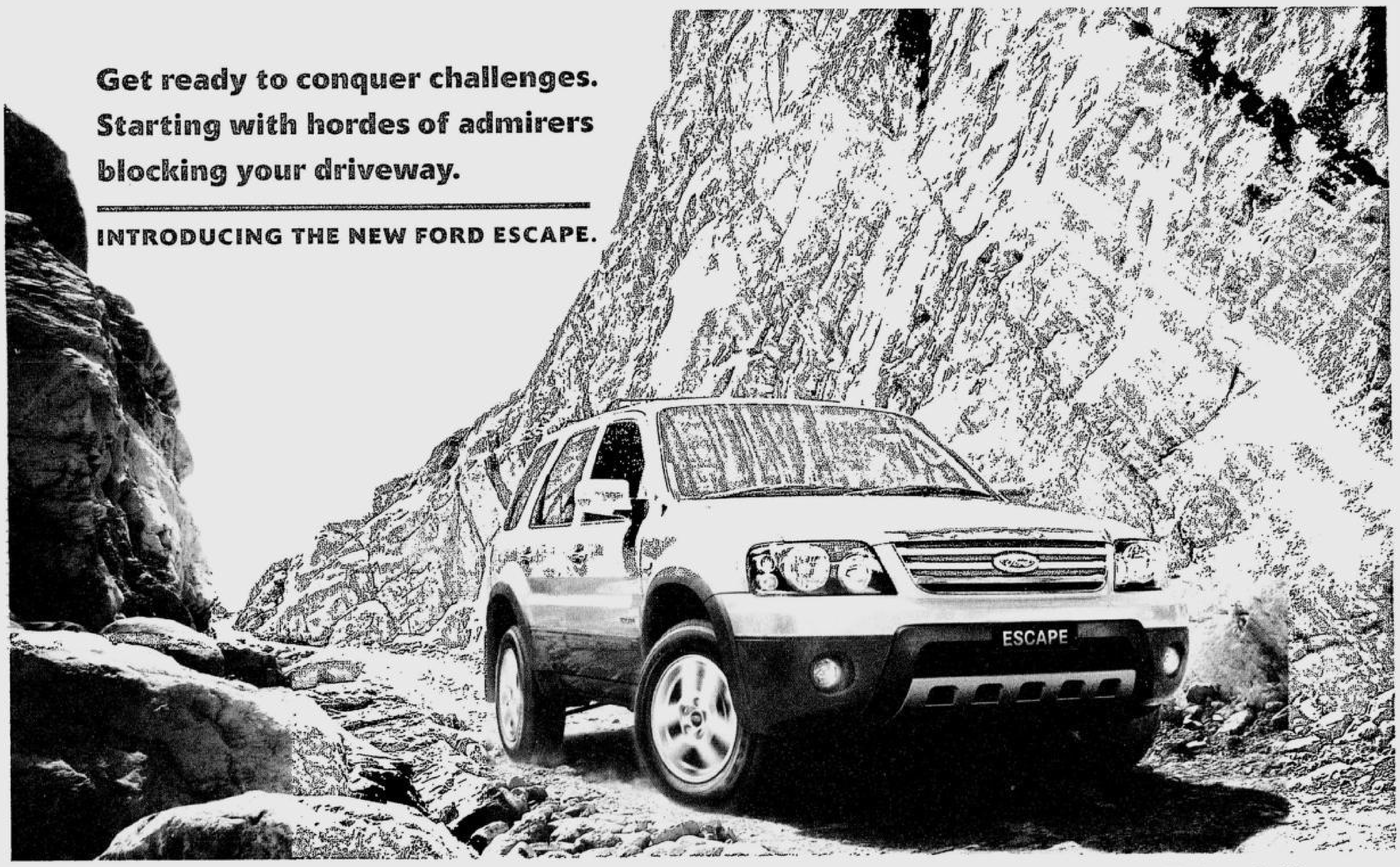

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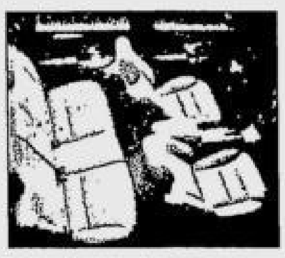

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Impending Unity Congress TRO dismays POC

By June Navarro

THE TWO TOP OFFICIALS OF THE Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) yesterday expressed dismay over the possibility that the Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP) will seek a temporary restraining order to stop the Unity Congress among the major stakeholders of the sport.

POC chair Robert Aventajado and president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. said the reported BAP plan to file a TRO defeats the spirit of Olympism that the Olympic body is trying to propagate.

"As a sports leader, it saddens me that a matter of sports is being brought to a legal forum," said Aventajado. "In other countries, sports leaders resolve controversial issues among themselves."

"A TRO runs counter to the Olympic principle of autonomy," said Cojuangco. "There had been several decisions already saying that the courts should not be involved in sports matters."

PBA chair Ricky Vargas, one of the prime movers of the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP), revealed the other day that a reliable source had told him of the BAP plan to secure a TRO and derail the holding of the Unity Congress set Feb. 5 at the Dusit Hotel.

The congress is expected to proclaim the interim officers of the SBP and fulfill the most decisive requirement in the joint communique that was signed by representatives of the BAP and Pilipinas Basketball.

The agreement was forged to lift the suspension slapped on the country by the international basketball federation (Fiba).

Newly elected BAP president Go Teng Kok denied Vargas' claim but confirmed reports that he and other officials of the organization would boycott the congress.

The BAP has had a history of using legal threats to weave out of trouble in the past.

Among others, the BAP had sought a TRO to stop the POC from ousting it from the local Olympic body in 2004. The move did not prosper.

Cojuangco believes, however, that the leadership crisis in basketball is over despite the distractions being attributed to the BAP.

"There's no other group capable of putting Philippine basketball back on its feet than the SBP officials," said Cojuangco. "All the ingredients are there—influence, expertise, money and a potentially strong national team."

Forming a strong RP squad completes the requirements of the communique, according to the SBP, whose top officials had personally informed the Fiba leadership in Geneva of the current status of the unification process.

Cojuangco said he has also discussed the dynamics of the raging controversy with Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte Sr., the new BAP chair, who is a political ally.

"He (Villafuerte) told me he just wanted to help," said Cojuangco. "I guess it's just a matter of informing him of what's really happening," said Cojuangco.

OIC rep clams up on BAP plan

TRUE TO FORM, THE REPRESENTATIVE of the International Olympic Committee to the Philippines has refused to make a comment on a threat of a temporary restraining order to stop the holding of the SBP Unity Congress on Feb. 5.

"I would rather not comment on it," said Frank Elizalde in a text message to the INQUIRER yesterday.

Elizalde, who in the past has also been slow to react to similar issues of legal intervention in sports, said he would wait for the TRO to be issued before commenting on it.

ELIZALDE

Toyota Otis, Hapee take semis openers

By Jasmine W. Payo

TOYOTA OTIS AND HAPEE-PCU REACHED the semifinals outright. Now the Sparks and the Teeth Masters seem in a hurry to forge a title showdown as well.

Paced by Marvin Cruz, Toyota Otis pulled away from Harbour Centre late in the fourth period to hammer out an 84-77 victory, while Hapee-PCU outclassed Mail and More, 81-67.

The Sparks and Teeth Masters go for a 2-0 lead against their respective foes when the best-of-five semifinal series resumes tomorrow at The Arena in San Juan.

The Sparks unloaded a 25-5 bomb with six minutes left in the game to wipe out a 72-59 lead by the Port Masters, who absorbed their second loss to Toyota Otis since their playoff for a semifinal slot last week.

"He worked very hard and he played very, very controlled basketball," said Toyota Otis coach Louie Alas of Cruz, who finished with a game-high 19 points, nine of them in that pivotal rally.

Jason Castro shone for the Teeth Masters with a team-high 15 points, seven assists and five rebounds.

"We put up an aggressive defense which created turnovers (for Mail and More), our fast-break points were also there," said Hapee-PCU coach Jun Noel.

The Teeth Masters forced the Comets to 31 turnovers.

Two key triples from Patrick Cabahug in the final two minutes boosted the Sparks' rally.

The scores:

First Game

TOYOTA OTIS 84—Cruz 19, Coronel 15, Daa 14, Cabahug 11, Aldave 10, Rodriguez 5, Jaime 4, Jazul 4, Santos 2, Alcaraz 0, Dedicatoria 0, Guevarra 0.

HARBOUR CENTRE 77—Fernandez 17, Alonzo 13, Lanete 10, Capati 9, Vergara 8, Araña 7, Intal 5, Ortiguerra 5, Gamboa 2, Williams 1, Asoro 0, Gaco 0.

Quarters: 23-22, 33-45, 55-60, 84-77

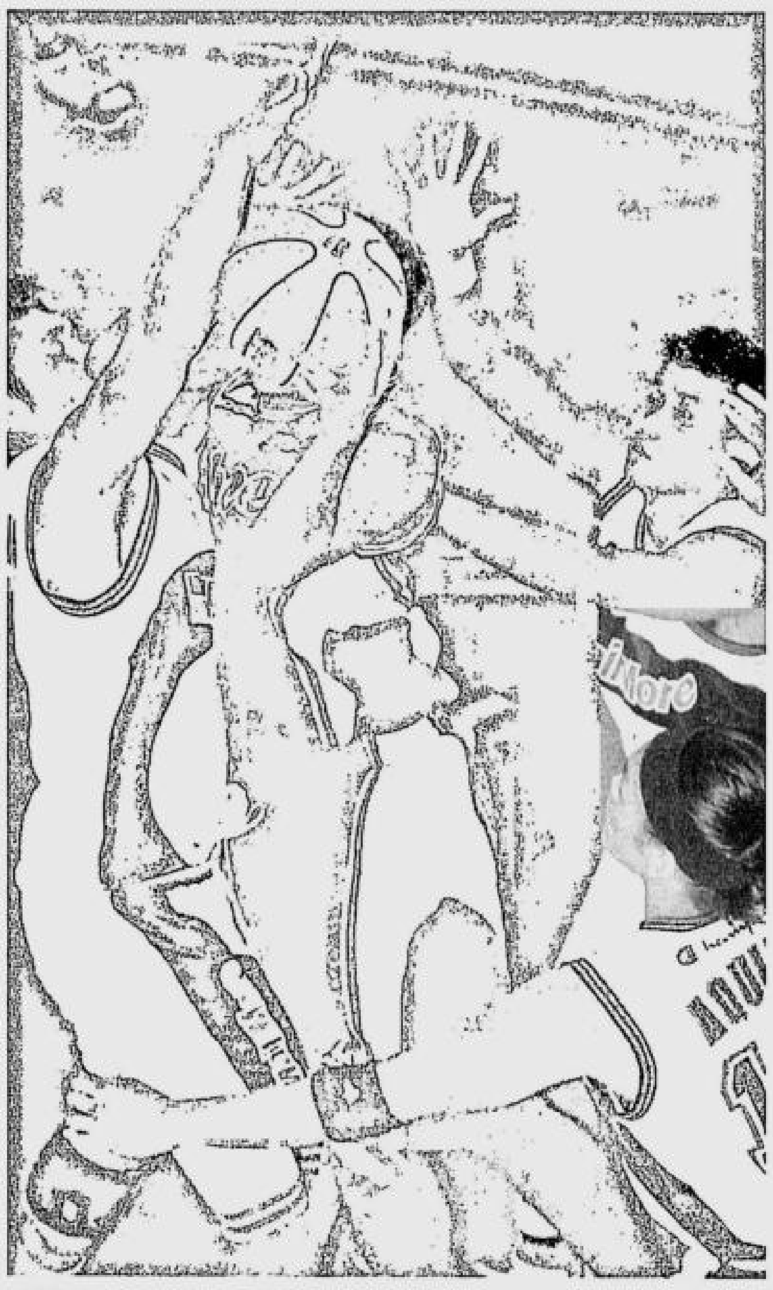
Second Game

HAPEE-PCU 81—Castro 15, Rodriguez 12, Sanz 12, Belga 11, Borboran 7, Larong 7, Bucao 6, Moreño 6, Rodriguez 3, Butel 2, Razon 0, Hugnatan 0.

MAIL AND MORE 67—Buenafe 16, Cañizares 11, Bravo 9, Viray 5, Pribhdas 4, Aquino 4, Del Rosario 4, Espiritu 4, Quiñahan 4, David 3, Ballesteros 2, Te 1, Yambao 0.

Quarters: 28-18, 50-35, 64-52, 81-67

GAMES TOMORROW
(*The Arena, San Juan*)
2 p.m.— Hapee-PCU vs Mail and More
4 p.m.— Toyota Otis vs Harbour Centre



MAIL and More's Jerby del Rosario (left) JR Aquino (12) and Jim Bruce Viray gang up on a driving Jayford Rodriguez of Hapee-PCU in their game at the Emilio Aguinaldo College gym yesterday. RYAN LIM

Tiebreak time anew for PBA s'finalists

COACH YENG GUIAO always believed that Game Four would be the pivotal match of a series that has turned out to be one of the most fiercely fought in Philippine Basketball Association history.

Red Bull won that one over arch nemesis San Miguel Beer, 109-107, and Guiao believes the fight Red Bull showed in that match is the same fight that will book the Barako a finals ticket.

"The important games you win in the series are not the ones you win by blowouts but by sheer determination," said Guiao, effectively dismissing whatever confidence the Beermen hope to gain from the memory of a 109-82 rout of the Barako in Game 3 of their Philippine Cup semifinal matchup.

Guiao has to prove his words today.

For the Barako, who face the Beermen in the first game at 4:35 p.m. at the Araneta Coliseum, the series has become a test of manhood, of not backing down even with the odds stacked against them.

"We will win this series the way we won Game Four, with grit and determination," Guiao vowed.

For Barangay Ginebra, which also tied its half of the series against Talk 'N Text, it is about finally showing the mystique that has made the Kings the adored team of the masses.

"I finally saw that never-say-die spirit of Ginebra," said coach Jong Uichico, whose Kings now enjoy a slight edge in their Game 5 duel with the Phone Pals at 7:20 p.m.

As pivotal as the Game 4 win was, Game 5 poses a historical sense of purpose for combatants battling it out in a best-of-seven affair.

In league history, 71 percent (17-of-24) of the teams that went on to win Game 5 of a race-to-four affair after a 2-2 deadlock went on to win the series.

And in the last five times that a series of seven games was tied after four matches, the team that went on to win Game 5 eventually took the series in a Game 7.

Francis Ochoa

GAMES TODAY
(*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:35 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Red Bull
7:20 p.m.—Talk 'N Text vs Ginebra

NCFP defers scam decision

THE NATIONAL CHESS FEDERATION OF THE PHILIPPINES YESTERDAY deferred its decision on players allegedly involved in game-fixing to give them time to air their side. The NCFP board headed by Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. also created a fact-finding internal affairs committee to look deeper into the scandal that has rocked the local chess community. According to Pichay, the probe team, co-chaired by former Benguet governor Raul "Rocky" Molintas and NCFP auditor Edmundo Legaspi, will bare its findings in the next two weeks. Until then, the players implicated in the alleged scheme to influence the results of tournaments are deemed innocent, Pichay said after the NCFP board meeting in Quezon City. "Hopefully, we'll come out with the result of the investigation within two weeks," he said. "But we won't mention names for now." *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

OLYMPIC QUALIFIER

Blu Girls rip Singaporeans

TAINAN CITY, TAIWAN—TEAM CAPTAIN Belen Asok blasted four hits in as many times at bat as the RP Blu Girls whipped Singapore, 5-2, yesterday to kick off their campaign in the Asia/Oceania Olympic Qualifier here.

The Singaporeans put up a strong fight but were held to two runs by pitchers Babette Ramos, Heidelyn Arca and Mary Joy Lasquite.

"This win certainly helps in building the girls' confidence," said Amateur Softball Association of the Philippines president Jean Henri Lhuillier. "They know there is no second chance, so we need to do very well in the first two days."

The Blu Girls were set to play South Korea later in the day. New Zealand and host Chinese Taipei were still playing at press time.

The winner of this tournament will join Australia, United States, Canada, Japan and China in the 2008 Olympiad along with two more qualifiers from the Americas and Africa-Europe.

FEU, UST tossers rip foes; Adamson softbelles unbeaten

By Jasmine W. Payo

FAR EASTERN AND SANTO TOMAS continued their domination of the UAAP women's volleyball tournament with separate wins Wednesday night at the Blue Eagle Gym.

FEU banked on the offensive brilliance of Mary Ann Manalo for a straight-sets victory against Adamson, 25-22, 25-17, 25-21, while Mary Jean Balse and Venus Bernal combined to lead UST to a 25-19, 25-15, 23-25, 25-14 triumph over a hard-fighting University of the East.

Manalo delivered 16 points, and Mecaila Morada produced 11 on nine kills and two blocks for FEU.

Balse, a national team mainstay, netted 16 kills, five aces and three blocks in a 24-point performance. Banal similarly tallied 24 points, including a match-high 20 kills.

The Tigresses and the Lady Tamaraws, who already claimed twice-to-beat semifinal incentives, remained on top with 10-1 slates.

Long-time UST mentor August Sta. Maria, though, hopes to get more quality minutes from the rest of his crew.

"I wanted to give my other players more exposure so that they'd be ready going into the Final Four," said Sta. Maria.

Adamson dropped to third at 7-4 card, while UE stayed in the running for the last semifinal berth despite slipping to 5-6.

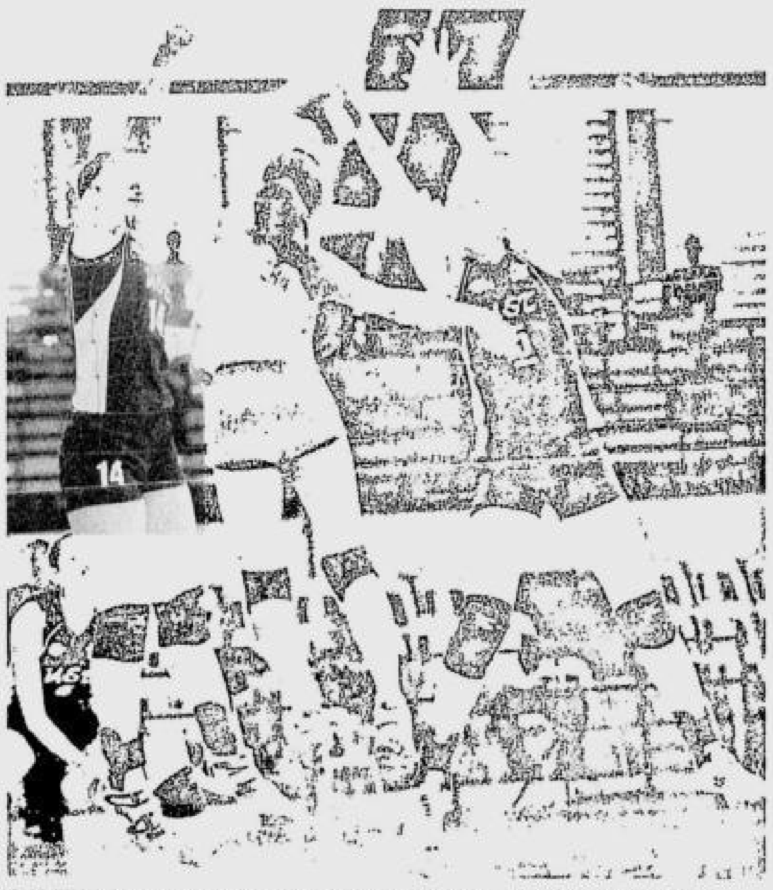
Ateneo improved to a fifth-best 4-7 record following a 25-15, 25-18, 25-17 victory over National University as Bea Pascual posted 15 points, eight coming from blocks.

In women's softball, Adamson moved within a win of sweeping the elimination round after shutting out Ateneo in an abbreviated match, 21-0, at the UST field.

Unbeaten in five games, the Lady Falcons produced nine runs in the first inning alone, highlighted by home runs by Chat Ditchon and Sarah Jane Agravante.

UST and the University of the Philippines shared second at 4-2 after the Tigresses edged the Lady Maroons, 6-3, in the other match.

In men's football at the Ateneo field, Meltion Pelayo, Adrian Guillermo and Ricardo Becite stuck in the 7th, 81st and 90th minutes, respectively, as UST (3-1-1) whipped UE (0-1-4), 3-0. In the other match, UP (2-2-2) battled Ateneo (1-2-2) to a 1-1 draw as Gino Tiongson scored for the Maroons and Jose Adonis Santos evened up for the Blue Eagles.



SANTO Tomas' Mary Jean Balce (5) and Denisse Patricia Tan foil UE's Katherine Rivera during their game at the Blue Eagle Gym. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Fernan Ikaw Pa Rin (1), Please Don't Stop (5), Ilang Ilang Queen (5), Hello Happy (2)
Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Mandalay Bay (2), Valentine Girl (4), Gentleman's Lady (7), Last Dance (3), JJ's Friend (1)
Race 3—(Tri)—Great Honour (3), Doteck (2), Rough Red/Kirsten (1)
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Dixie Dash (1), Friendly Fire (7), Real Tough (2), Lucky Punch (3)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Shutter (5), Great Emma (2), Flying Jojie (3), Triple Threat (4)
Race 6—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Beautiful Jaeda (8), Cuadro De Alas (5), Lovable Trisha (10), Sandok (1), Richie Rich (6), Brazen Truth (11)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Dark Desert (4), District Three (3), Dalcross (2), Kamia (2), Alexis Magic (8)
Race 8—(Qrt/Tri)—Sweet Xarah (4), Miss Lylypilly (1), Sand Pebbles (2), Regal Boom (3)
Race 9—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—ARcher (8), Tanging Ikaw (7), Naughty (2), Premiere Act (1), Terry Toon (6), Gold Collar (10)

SPORTSWATCH

Pole vault festival lures 4 foreign teams

THE COUNTRY'S FINEST POLE VAULTERS WILL COLLIDE WITH SOME OF Asia's best in the inaugural Philippine Pole Vault Festival which comes off the wraps on March 30 at the SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City. The organizing Philippine Pole Vault Club, headed by former Southeast Asian Games champion Emerson Obiena, yesterday said that the event will feature 14 local and four foreign squads. Top collegiate vaulter Jerome Margallo leads the local bidders along with Palarong Pambansa record-holder Dyundi Binas in the one-day competition. Tough teams from China and Japan lead the foreign cast which also include squads from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Teams from Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Australia are also keen on joing the event.

2nd Magsaysay chess stakes cash prizes

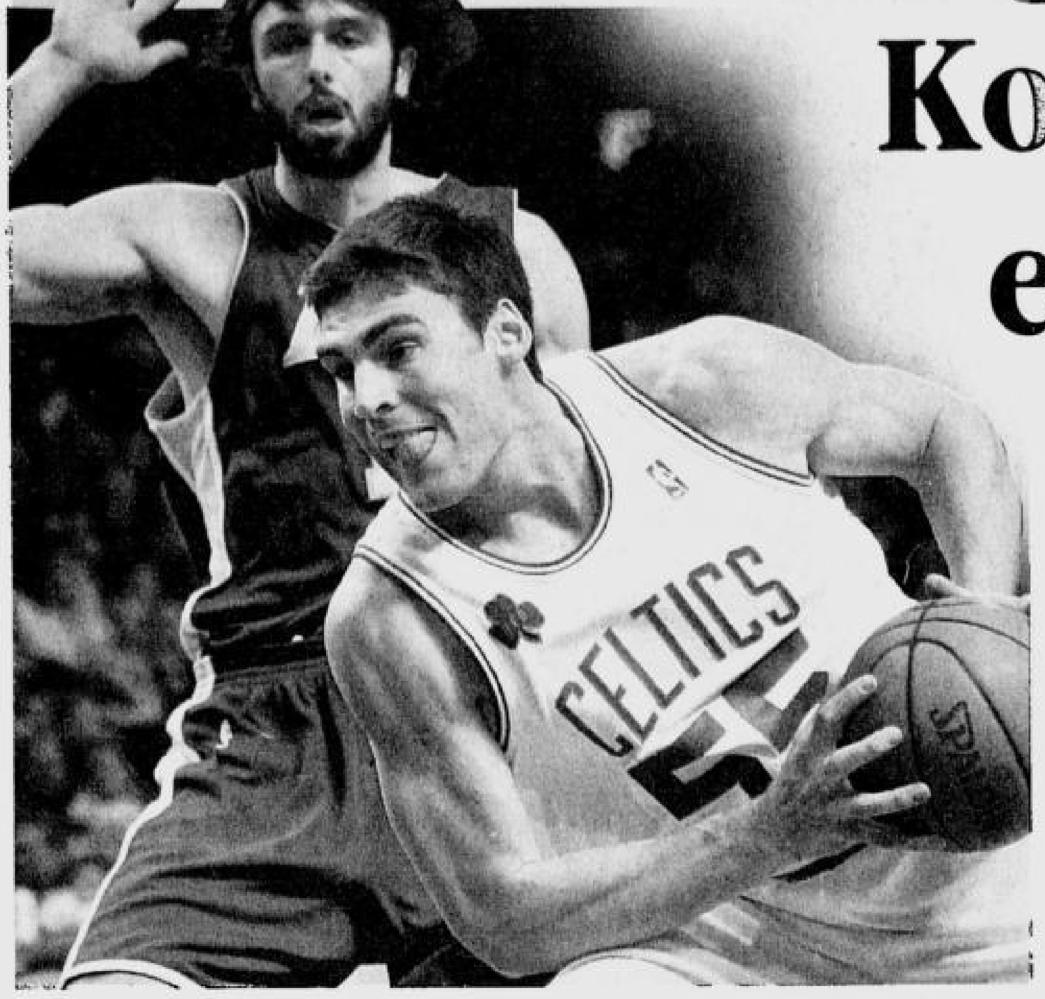
CASH PRIZES ARE UP FOR GRABS IN THE 2ND MITOS MAGSAYSAY chess tournament this month at the Olongapo City National High School covered court. The tournament features action in the elementary, high school, college and adults levels. The elementary and high school play will be held on Feb. 16-17 while the college and adults tourney will be held on Feb. 23-24. Sponsored by the Triangle Chess Club led by Don Bundang, Aura College Chess Club headed by Dean Edgar Geniza and Rey Paul Hechanova, the tournament offers a top prize of P5,000 in the college and adult levels, P3,000 in the high school level and P2,000 in the elementary level. Interested parties may register at the OCNHS, care of Art Galang, or call Bundang at 0921-7217803, Geniza at 0918-6251475 or Imelda Ramos at 0920-9519750.

Ramirez, Lopez, Aventajado in Scoop

PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION chair William "Butch" Ramirez, Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines president Manny Lopez and Philippine Taekwondo Association head Robert Aventajado are today's guests of the Scoop weekly session at the Kamayan Restaurant-Padre Faura in Ermita, Manila. Ramirez will update sportswriters on the programs of his agency for the year and award the cash incentives to medal winners in the recent Asian Paralympic Games. Aventajado and Lopez will discuss their respective sport's preparations for this year's SEA Games and the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

70 fights in PCCA derby 3rd leg today

THE THIRD LEG OF THE PASAY COCKPIT ASSOCIATION (PCCA) 5-COCK derby series fires off at 5 p.m. today at Pasay City Cockpit with 70 matches backed by Sagupaan Complexor 3000 on tap. Gunning for the championship are cocker-sportsmen Tony Lasala, Rey Briones, Pepito Ngo, Boy de Roca, Arman Santos, Joel Fernando, Pol Estrellado, Tony Antonio, Ric de Guzman, Madlambayan Brothers, Dodie and Mamad Villarubio, Gov. Ito Ynares and Lito Roque, among others. Up next on Tuesday at the same venue is the National.Cockers Association (NCA) 5-Cock Derby.



BOSTON Celtics' Wally Szczerbiak (55) drives past LA Lakers' Vladimir Radmanovic. AP

Kobe shines as Lakers extend Celtics slump

BOSTON—KOBE BRYANT RETURNED from a one-game suspension in style, piling up 43 points, eight rebounds and eight assists as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the reeling Boston Celtics, 111-98, on Wednesday.

The Celtics lost their 13th straight game, tying a franchise record, to slip to 12-33. They have gone 2-19 since Paul Pierce injured his left foot.

Bryant registered his fourth career 40-point game against Boston after serving his suspension for hitting San Antonio's Manu Ginobili in the face on Sunday.

The win kept Los Angeles (28-18) in second place in the Pacific Division and sixth in the Western Conference.

Smush Parker added 19 points for the Lakers and Vladimir Radmanovic chipped in with 13.

BRYANT: Vengeful

Ryan Gomes scored 23 points to lead the Celtics, who also lost 13 straight games in 1996-97.

The Detroit Pistons made a team record 27 consecutive free throws as they beat the New Jersey Nets, 113-89.

The Sacramento Kings won for just the fourth time in 15 games with a 100-98 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Gerald Wallace had a career-high 42 points as the Charlotte Bobcats routed the New York Knicks, 104-87.

Tracy McGrady scored 36 points as the Houston Rockets beat the Seattle SuperSonics, 112-102. *Reuters*

COMPLETE RESULTS: Toronto 119, Washington 109; Charlotte 104, NY Knicks 87; Atlanta 115, Golden State 94; Orlando 98, Milwaukee 73; LA Lakers 111, Boston 98; Detroit 113, New Jersey 89; Dallas 95, Memphis 94; Philadelphia 89, N.O./Oklahoma City 78; Houston 112, Seattle 102; Sacramento 100, Minnesota 98; Utah 97, San Antonio 93; Portland 100, Denver 91; LA Clippers 110, Chicago 98.

Super Bowl extravaganza to lure 13 million viewers

WASHINGTON—BUDDING FILMmakers will win fleeting fame before millions of American football fans during Sunday's Super Bowl bonanza with US companies for the first time turning over the world's most expensive ad slots to amateurs.

In a bid to tap into the success of popular websites like YouTube, some companies forking out $2.6 million for a 30-second ad during the American football championship have recruited amateur video makers to publicize their products.

Up to 133 million viewers are expected to tune in for Sunday's 11-hour television marathon on CBS which will broadcast live the National Football League finale between the Chicago Bears and the Indianapolis Colts.

But according to marketing expert John Antil, at least 50 percent of the audience will be more interested in the glitzy ads than the game.

"It's by far the major event for advertising. The advertising showcast is unique," Antil, associate professor in marketing at the University of Delaware, told AFP.

For the first time advertisers such as car manufacturers Chevrolet, snack food maker Doritos and even the NFL itself have run competitions to find the best ad by an amateur filmmaker.

Doritos received 1,000 entries for its competition which it has whittled down to five. Each of the five filmmakers will receive $10,000, and their entries will be subjected to an electronic vote with the winner to be broadcast on the day.

Chevy called on marketing students to create a story-board to promote its vehicles aimed at the youth market. But then it hired professionals for the actual filming. *AFP*

Els, 2 others lead with 66s

DUBAI—ERNIE ELS MADE A FLYing start in his bid to claim an unprecedented fourth Dubai Desert Classic trophy, firing a six-under-par 66 in the first round on Thursday.

The 37-year-old South African, starting at the 10th hole on a calm, sunny day at the Emirates Golf Club, set the early pace alongside Spain's Jose Manuel Lara and Jyoti Randhawa of India.

At the end of last year, Els said he had formulated a three-year plan to challenge Tiger Woods at the top of the world rankings. On the evidence of Thursday's showing, he may get there quicker than he predicted.

The world number four suffered a shaky start, almost driving out of bounds at the long 10th and dropping a stroke by three-putting the short 11th.

But Els, champion here in 2005, 2002 and 1994, hit back with an eagle at the par-four 12th when his seven-iron from 167 yards rolled straight into the cup. He followed up with four birdies in a five-hole burst to reach the turn in five-under 32.

The three-time major champion appeared to be targeting his own course record of 61 achieved in 1994 when he added further birdies at the first and third. But he lost momentum by three-putting the short fourth for another bogey.

Sharing fourth place on 67 were British pair Phillip Price and Simon Dyson and Thongchai Jaidee of Thailand.

World number one Tiger Woods, who pipped Els for the title in a playoff last year, was a late starter in a group with Spain's Miguel Angel Jimenez and Johan Edfors of Sweden. *Reuter*

TALLEST CAGER

7-foot-9 Sun turns pro

SUN Ming Ming dwarfs 6-foot-2 teammate Randy Gill. AP

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND—SUN MING MING, A 2.36m Chinese center, became the tallest player in professional basketball history when he signed with the minor-league Maryland Nighthawks here on Wednesday.

The 22-year-old goliath will wear jersey number 79, for his 7-foot-9-inches height in US terms, and help the American Basketball Association club while trying to achieve his dream of reaching the elite-level National Basketball Association.

"I want to play in the NBA," Sun said.

Sun, who wears size 19 shoes and weighs about 160kg, will likely become a drawing card for the 50-team league, which has clubs in smaller venues and tries to serve as a development area for players dreaming of an NBA career.

"Sun's skills are tremendous," Nighthawks co-owner and league president Tom Doyle said. "There hasn't been a player this big at this young of an age that has the skills that he has at this point. He sees the floor. His skills are tremendous." Doyle said if an NBA club showed interest, his club would not stand in the way of allowing the native of Harbin to depart.

"Obviously we'd like to keep him here the entire season, but if someone upstairs in the NBA wants a look at him, we're not standing in the way," he said.

Will Rankin, the Nighthawks' coach, praised Sun for his basketball knowledge. Sun has played for China's world junior squad but was bypassed in the 2005 NBA Draft, likely over concerns about a lack of speed and fitness.

"Sun, who has undergone surgery to remove a tumor from his pituitary gland, makes his debut for the Nighthawks here on Saturday against the Strong Island Sound. *AFP*

Villaroman, Bayron join . . .

From page A25

Pagunsan nor Frankie Miñoza.

Villaroman knocked in a birdie from three feet on his final hole for a four-under-par 68 yesterday to catch amateur ace and former bag-toter Jay Bayron in the lead, along with two former winners and two others in relatively calm conditions at Wack Wack East.

Bayron rode an eagle-spiked round in one of the early flights, even going 5-under with five to play before dropping a shot on the par-4, 412-yard eighth hole.

Anthony Kang, the 34-year-old Korean-born 1999 champion who migrated to the United States when he was 10, and Taiwan's Wang Ter-chang, the 1992 winner at Puerto Azul, were also in the lead together with China's Liang Wenchong and American Jason Knutzon.

One-stroke lead

The leading group held a one-stroke lead over five players composed of dangerous Thai veteran Prayad Marksaeng, Korean Park Jun-won, India's Digvijay Singh and Aussies Jarrod Moseley and David Barnsdon.

The hype on the fomidable local challenge did not follow the script.

Miñoza, in his first Open in four years, started out bogey-bogey and scrambled to a 73, while Pagunsan never got it going and ballooned to a 79 that virtually took him out of it all with still three rounds to play.

So precise with his iron shots and confident around the sleek greens, Villaroman knocked down an eye-popping eight birdies—five of them in the back nine where he started—before stumbling with a double bogey 6 on No. 1 and dropping shots on Nos. 3 and 6.

He finished with birdies in his last two holes, though, the last after a perfect 9-iron to within three feet to secure his best start in this tournament.

CARITO Vilaroman birdies five holes in the front nine for a sizzling 31.

"I've never really contended well here," said Villaroman, who won the RP Amateurs as a 15-year-old over the same East course in 1985, a victory that was sandwiched by triumphs in the Junior World championships over the likes of Ernie Els and Phil Mickelson.

"I've been working on my game all the time," he added. "I'm taking this tournament one hole at a time, try to keep a positive attitude and see what happens."

Country's top amateur

Bayron, meanwhile, justified his tag as the country's premier amateur after Pagunsan joined the pro ranks early last year, shooting four birdies aside from a 20-foot eagle 3 on the par-5 fourth hole.

"I just hit the ball solid today and I played a great all-around game," the Canlubang standout Bayron, who needed just 26 putts and missed just three greens, told reporters in Filipino.

Asian Games bronze medalist Michael Bibat was in a 17-man logjam for 28th spot after assembling a 72 to be the next best-placed amateur after Bayron, even as defending champion Scott Strange of Australia trailed by five after a 73.

No repeat winner

No man has repeated as winner in Asia's oldest national championship in 50 years, and Strange needs to start his climb in the second round today if he hopes to make a serious challenge.

The back nine-starting Pagunsan, the Asian Tour's reigning Rookie of the Year, bogeyed four straight from his second hole before making a quadruple bogey 7 on the deadly 17th.

Artemio Murakami and journeyman Benjie Magada were in a group three shots off the pace after firing identical 71s, with Filipinos Mars Pucay, Elmer Salvador and Richard Sinfuego and 2005 winner Adam Le Vesconte of Australia matching par 72.

Joining Strange and Miñoza at 73 were local bets Marlon Dizon, Edwin Sanchez, Anthony Balan, Cookie La'O, Ibarra Quiachon and 2000 winner Gerald Rosales and nine foreigners including Englishman Chris Rodgers.

Robert Pactolerin, the 1990 winner, shot a 74 like Danny Zarate. They were in a group that also had pro-am champion Adam Blyth of Australia and 2004 champion at Riviera Edward Michaels of the United States.

Only the top 65 scores and ties will make it to weekend play.

The notables flirting below the cut line include Vietnam Carlsberg Masters champion Angelo Que, who assembled a 75, former winner Cassius Casas, who submitted a 76, and Thai aces Chawalit Plaphol and Thaworn Wiratchant, who fired 76s like Filipino Jherome Delariarte.

SCORES: First round, 91st Philippine Open

68—Jason Knutzon (US), Jay Bayron (a) (RP); Anthony Kang (US), Wang Ter-chang (TPE), Liang Wen-chong (CHN), Carito Villaroman (RP);

69—Prayad Marksaeng (THA), Park Jun-won (KOR), Jarrod Moseley (AUS), David Bransdon (AUS), Digvijay Singh (IND);

70—Taichiro Kiyota (JPN), Olle Nordberg (SWE), Lin Chien-bing (TPE), Gurbaaz Mann (IND), Han Lee (KOR), Kwanchai Tannin (THA);

71—Guido Van Der Valk (NLD), Artemio Murakami (RP), Bryan Saltus (US), Benjie Magada (RP), Sung Mao-chang (TPE), Clay Devers (US), Neven Basic (AUS), Kao Bo-song (TPE), Lu Wei-chih (TPE), Rick Gibson (CAN), Michael Bibat [a] (RP), Elmer Salvador (RP), Panuwat Muenlek (THA), 28 Richard Sinfuego (RP);

72—Chen Tze-chung (TPE), Lu Wen-teh (TPE), Lin Keng-chi (TPE), Adam Le Vesconte (AUS), Chan Song (KOR), Shigemasa Higaki (JPN), Wisut Artjanawat (THA), Chang Tse-peng (TPE), Gavin Flint (AUS), Marciano Pucay (RP), Soe Kyaw Naing (MYN), Rowan Beste (AUS), Mark Brown (NZL), Ross Bain (SCO);

73—Kim Hye-dong (KOR), Marlon Dizon (RP), David Gleeson (AUS), Chris Rodgers (ENG), Scott Strange (AUS), Airil Rizman Zahari (MAS), Edwin Sanchez (RP), Anthony Balan (RP), Ashley Hall (AUS), Cookie Lao (RP), Brad Iles (NZL), Tatsuaki Nakamura (JPN), Chapchai Nirat (THA), Frankie Minoza (RP), Gerald Rosales (RP), Marcus Both (AUS), Martin Rominger (SUI), Ibarra Quiachon (RP), Robert Pactolerin (RP);

74—S. Murthy (MAS), Edward Michaels (US), Adam Blyth (AUS), Tony Carolan (AUS), Lin Wen-hong (TPE), Yeh Chang-ting (TPE), Lin Chie-hsiang (TPE), Danny Zarate (RP), Eddie Heinen (US), Richard Moir (AUS), Zaw Moe (MYN), Arjun Singh (IND);

75—Simon Griffiths (ENG), Barry Hume (SCO), Angelo Que (RP), Corey Harris (US), Rey Alit (RP), Mike Cunning (US), Antonio Asistio II [a] (RP), Uttam Singh Mundy (IND), Hwang Jae-min (KOR), Ari Savolainen (FIN), Randy Garalde (RP), Hsieh Chin-sheng (TPE), Eddie Bagtas (RP), Anthony Fernando [a] (RP);

76—Cassius Casas (RP), Rashid Ismail (MAS), Simon Dunn (SCO), Gene Xavier Bondoc [a] (RP), Chawalit Plaphol (THA), Nam Young-woo (KOR), Mitchell Brown (AUS), Troy Kennedy (AUS), Michael Wright (AUS), Tatsuhiko Ichihara (JPN), Iain Steel (MAS), Thaworn Wiratchant (THA), Lam Chih Bing (SIN), Luis Dacudab (RP), Somkiat Srisanga (THA), Stephen Scahill (NZL), Jerome Delariarte (RP);

77—Orland Sumcad (RP), Ben St John (ENG), Jonel Ababa [a] (RP), Hironori Yoshida (JPN), Suk Jong-yul (KOR), Satoshi Shimouchi (JPN), Richard Lee (NZL), Amritinder Singh (IND), Pornsakon Tipsanit (THA), Mikael Detterberg (SWE), Anusorn Songserm (THA), Atthaphon Prathummanee (THA), Ronnachai Jamnong (THA);

78—Roy Moon (US), Jin Park (KOR), Adam Groom (AUS), Andrew Pitts (US), Amardip Malik (IND), P. GUNasegaran (MAS), Rey Pagunsan (RP), Tony Lascuna (RP), Richard Abaring (RP), Scott Taylor (US), Juvic Pagunsan (RP);

79—Mark Fernando [a] (RP), Gaganjeet Bhullar (IND), Vivek Bhandari (IND), Danny Chia (MAS), Craig Smith (WAL), David Freeman (HKG), Kevin Tayao [a] (RP), Michael Alejandro [a] (RP);

80—Edwin Estrera (RP), Benjie Sarmiento [a] (RP);

81—Naman Dawar (IND), Choengchai Panpumpo (THA), Scott Hend (AUS), Unho Park (AUS), Kane Webber (AUS), Marvin Dumandan (RP), Jong Laput [a] (RP);

82—John Gobing [a] (RP), Chen Yuan-chi (TPE), Hanafiah Jamil (MAS);

83—Danie Bisera [a] (RP), Hanson So (RP), Erwin Arcillas (RP), Rico Depilo (RP);

86—Shaaban Hussein (MAS);

PAIRINGS: Second round

Tee No. 1
6:30 a.m. B. Sarmiento (A)
K. Tannin, A. Fernando (a)
6:40—R. Pactorelin, S. Hussein, C. Casas
6:50—A. Singh, R. Sinfuego, T. Kiyota
7:00—R. Moon, R. Ismail, R. Bain
7:10—M. Dizon, S. Grilliths, B. Hume
7:20—B. Saltus, G. X. Bondoc (a), O. Sumcad
7:30—C. Rodgers, A. Que, J. Knutzon
7:40—L. W. Teh, P. Marksaeing, A. R. Zahari
7:50—L. Keng-Chi, N. Young-Woo, T. Carolan
8.00—C. Harris, C. Song, L. Wen-Hong
8:10— M. Fernando (a), Y. Chang-Ting, A. Malik
8:20—Jong Laput (a). L. Chien-Bing, B. Magada
8:30—A. Balan, D. Bisera (a), W. Artjanawat
11:15—T. Lascuna, R. Depilo, S. Kyaw Naing
11:25—J. Moseley, R. Abaring, G. Mann
11:35—T. Kennedy, C. Lao, H. Lee
11:45—T. Nakamura, T. Ichihara, C. Yuan-Chi
11:55—M. Cunning, E. Arcillas, N. Basic
12:05—U. Park, K. Bo-Song, C. Nirat
12:15—S. Jong-yul, L. Wen-Chong, K. Webber
12:25—G. Rosales, R. Gibson, D. Chia
12:35—M. Dumandan, E. Heinen, A. Singh
12:45—S. Taylor, D. Singh, M. Detterberg
12:55—S. Srisa-Nga, A. Savolainen, R. Garalde,
13:05—E. Estrera, A. Prathummanee, R. Moir
13:15—S. Scahill, I. Quiachon, E. Bagtas
Tee No. 10
6:35—M. Bibat (a), E. Salvador, P. Muenlek
6:45—R. Jamnong, Z. Moe, S. Murthy
6:55—J. Delariarte, S. Dunn, K. Hye-Dong
7:05—H. Jamil, D. Gleeson, J. Park
7:15—G. Van Der Valk, A. Murakami, A. Groom
7:25—E. Michaels, A. Blyth, J. Pagunsan
7:35—S. Stranger, C. Plaphol, C. Tze-Chung
7:45—P. Jun Won, A. Pitts, A. Vesconte
7:55—M. Brown, O. Nordberg, S. Higaki
8:05—L. Chie Hsiang, P.Gunasegaran, E. Sanchez
8:15—G. Flint, J. Gobing (a), R. Pagunsan
8:25—B. St John, J. Bayron (a), C. Tse-Peng
8:35—J. Ababa (a), G. Bhullar, M. Pucay
11:20—M. Alejandro (a), N. Dawar, R. Alit
11:30—C. Panpumpo, V. Bhandari, D. Zarate
11:40—A. Hall, H. So, H. Yoshida
11:50—S. Mao-Chang, M. Wright, B. Iles
12:00—C. Devers, I. Steel, S. Hend
12:10—R. Beste, L. Wei-Chih, A. Kang
12:20—W. Ter-Chang, T. Wiratchant, F. Minoza
12:30—M. Both, A. Asistio II (a) S. Shimouchi
12:40—D. Bransdon, M. Rominger, R. Lee
12:50—L.Chih-Bing, C. Smith, P. Tipsanit
13:00—C. Villaroman, U. Singh Mundy, M. Brown
13:10—L. Dacudao, H. Jae-Min, D. Freeman
13:20—K. Tayao (a), H. Chin-Sheng, A. Songserm,

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SHEILA Mae Perez (left) and Ceseil Domenios perform in the 3-meter synchronized platform during the 2005 Manila SEA Games. AP

Divers may just make it to Olympics this time

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE FILIPINO DIVERS WHO MISSED THE chance to compete in Athens four years ago may just make it to the Beijing Olympics next year.

That's the forecast of the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association (Pasa) yesterday as it picked a "short list" of divers who will be named to the Olympic training program of First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

Pasa president Mark Joseph refused to name the divers but said the lineup is most likely to be made up of the same team that was denied of the Olympic stint in 2004.

Southeast Asian Games gold-medal winners Sheila Mae Perez, Jaime Asok, Zandro Domenios and Ryan Rexel Fabriga were not allowed by previous Pasa officials to compete in the Olympic qualifying of the Athens Games.

"They failed to get into the qualifying even though they have a strong chance of making it to Athens," said Joseph, who stopped short of blaming the previous Pasa administration.

"But the important thing is they have moved on," he added of the team that nailed five gold medals for the Philippines during the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

If plans push through, Joseph said, the diving team will be on a year-long training camp in either Beijing or Guangzhou under world-renowned coach Zhang Dehu.

Zhang, who has trained Chinese world champions, has written books on new diving techniques and was instrumental in the country's successful SEAG stint two years ago.

The team hopes to take part in the Melbourne World Championships in March, which will be the first "window of opportunity" for the RP divers to make it to the Beijing Games.

They will also compete in the World Cup in Beijing in February 2008 where they will be gauged by their rankings against the best in the world.

Diving is one of the 12 priority sports which the FG Foundation will bankroll in a bid to win the country's first Olympic gold medal.

31st Milo Marathon gets going Sunday in Batangas

EIGHT WEEKS AFTER THE 2006 GRAND finale at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila, the annual Milo Marathon hits the road anew this Sunday for its 31st season.

The country's biggest and longest-running foot race will hold its opening leg in Batangas City this year using an out-and-back course from the city plaza.

Last year's 21K race here was one of the most exciting with Bernardo Desamito edging two-time national champion Allan Ballester for the men's crown.

Desamito and Ballester eventually placed second and third, respectively, in the 2006 finals behind champion Julius Sermona.

The women's race was topped by the up-and-coming Maricel Maquilan, who defeated veteran Liza Delfin and Perly Yambao.

Yambao is the younger sister of 2003 Milo Marathon women's champion Liza.

Tight race seen

National race organizer Rudy Biscocho predicts another tight race on Sunday where some 4,000 runners are expected, including entries in the 5K and 3K events.

The top three runners in the 21K run will qualify for the Nov. 18 national finals, also slated in Manila.

This year's races are held in partnership with Bayview Park Hotel-Manila.

Milo Sports Events executive Pat Gocong said all participants must be at the starting area not later than 5 a.m. for pre-race briefing and check in.

Runners are also advised to wear the Milo T-shirts given to them upon registration for security purposes. Those not wearing the proper T-shirts cannot join the race.

The 31st season will have 24 legs. After this Sunday's Batangas City leg, the races go to Puerto Princesa City in Palawan on Feb. 11, Malolos in Bulacan on Feb. 18 and Tarlac City on Feb. 25.

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IN THIS ISSUE
DOJ advice sought on MRT deal /B3
Pre-need sales seen picking up /B4

'06 budget deficit hits 8-year low of ₱62.2B

Analysts see ratings upgrade in the horizon; gov't to keep '07 ceiling of P63B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET DEFICIT IN 2006 settled at an eight-year low of P62.2 billion—less than half the P125-billion target set for the year—due to tight government spending and higher-than-expected revenue collection.

"The better-than-expected fiscal performance brings us closer to our goal of achieving a balanced budget by 2008," Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said.

The deficit declined for a fourth straight year, hitting its lowest level since 1999 when the budget gap hit P111.7 billion.

After reaching a historic high of P210.74 billion in 2002, the deficit slid to P199.9 billion in 2003, P187 billion in 2004, and P146.8 billion in 2005. The drop was a result of revenue-raising measures which the government implemented to avert a fiscal crisis.

The government this year intends to limit its budget deficit to P63 billion, or about 0.9 percent of GDP, despite plans to increase spending on infrastructure, education and health under a soon-to-be signed budget bill amounting to P1.126 trillion.

The higher expenditures are intended to bring economic growth this year to 6.1-6.7 percent, significantly higher than last year's 5.4 percent growth.

The budget gap of 2006 was equivalent to 1.04 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), well under the 2.1 percent ceiling set for that year.

Last year, the government saw P978.7 billion worth of revenue and P1.041 trillion worth of expenditure, the Depart-

'06 BUDGET/ B4

Gov't sees ₱2-B gain from sale of bank, airport

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT EXPECTS TO generate about P2 billion in additional revenue this year from the planned sale of the old Iloilo airport and the Al-Amanah Islamic Bank.

The Department of Finance announced that, aside from the government's 46-percent stake in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC), the airport and the Islamic bank are the other state assets most likely to be sold this year.

A Singapore firm has already offered a bid of P25.2 billion for the PTIC stake. But the government is still awaiting PTIC's decision whether it would exercise its right to match the bid.

An official from the DOF said that, based on market value reports, the 60-hectare old Iloilo airport could be sold from anywhere between P500 million to P2 billion, an amount that will go directly to state coffers.

The government, however, is not expected to financially gain much from the sale of the Islamic bank because proceeds might only be used to pay for its liabilities, the official added.

The bank was established in 1990 to serve the peculiar banking needs of Muslim Filipinos. But the bank suffered from huge losses, prompting the government to give up ownership of the bank.

The government has tapped CB Richard Elis as real estate adviser for the airport property. The government wants to sell the Iloilo property, now that a new airport is set to open this year.

This year, the government is hoping to generate P25.7 billion from its privatization thrust.

But with the sale of all the assets, including

GOV'T/ B3

INDICATORS

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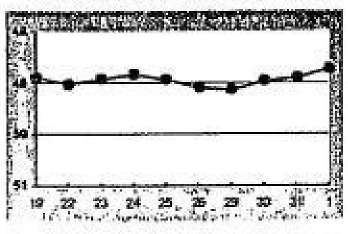

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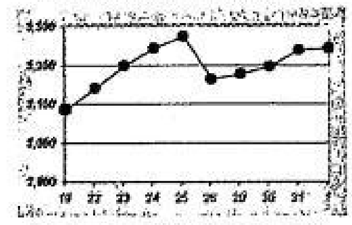
STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Shares close 0.18% higher

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY CLOSED 0.18 percent higher as investors switched to small cap stocks after pocketing gains in blue-chips like Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), dealers said.

They said the lower-than-programmed government budget deficit of P62.2 billion ($1.27 billion) in 2006, which was announced shortly before the market closed, might have also inspired some last-minute buying.

The composite index closed 5.99 points higher at 3,245.26, after moving between 3,217.90 and 3,247.05.

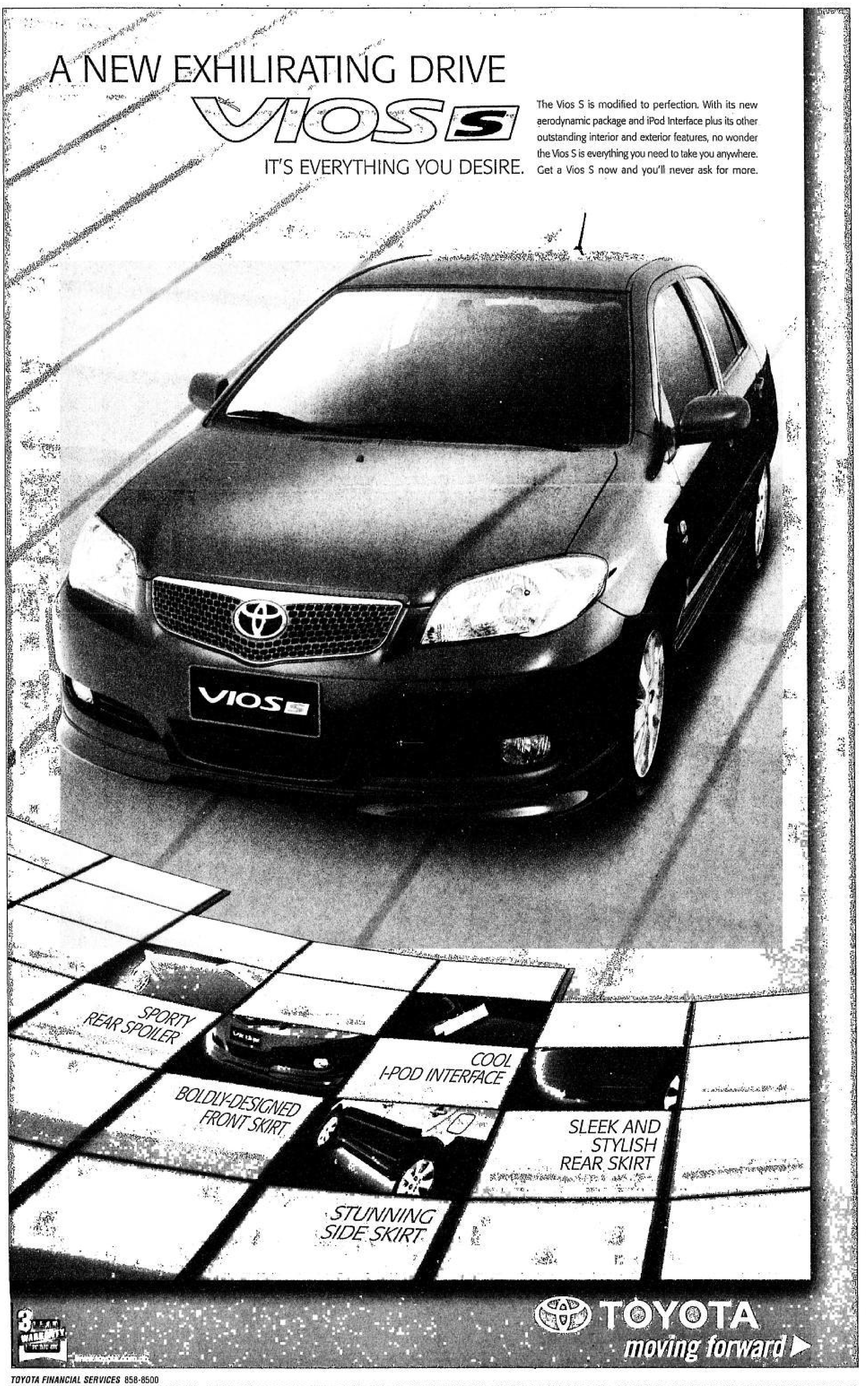
The broader all-share index rose 11.43 points to 2,023.98.

Gainers led losers 70 to 31, while 66 stocks were unchanged. Turnover was 3.06 billion shares worth P4.25 billion ($87.1 million).

"We saw profit-taking in strong performers in recent sessions, such as PLDT and Ayala Land Inc., and a switch to second and third-liners," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities.

However, he said there may still be some follow-through buying on Friday after the government announced a better-than-expected

SHARES/ B3



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FirstPac still keen on gov't stake in PLDT shareholder

HK firm to match bid for PTIC stake by March 2

By Michelle V. Remo and Riza Olchondra

HONG KONG-BASED FIRST PACIFIC Co. Ltd. said it was still keen on buying the government's 46-percent stake in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC).

PTIC is a single purpose holding company that owns 13.8 percent of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., the country's largest telecommunications company.

First Pacific told the Philippine Stock Exchange that it was now securing the approval of its shareholders, and it intended to exercise its right to match the bid for the PTIC shares on or before March 2.

First Pacific was about to sign a deed of sale with the government last Jan. 31.

The signing was put off at the last minute, however, due to a directive from the Hong Kong Stock Exchange for First Pacific to first get shareholders' approval.

"First Pacific considers that the right to match represents an attractive opportunity to increase its economic interest in PLDT, which is one of the group's principal assets," First Pacific said in a disclosure to the PSE.

"The directors consider that the terms on which the right to match can be exercised are fair and reasonable and in the interests of First Pacific's shareholders as a whole," the company added.

Being the majority shareholder of PTIC with a 54-percent stake, First Pacific has the right to match the P25.2-billion bid raised by Singaporean firm Parrallax Capital.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said that with the sale of PTIC shares, the government would boost its revenues, consistent with the target to lower the budget deficit this year to only P63 billion.

Firm offers lessons on 'ethical' hacking

By Ronnel W. Domingo

COMPUTER HACKERS MAY NOW get globally-recognized certification as Informatics Holdings Philippines Inc. yesterday announced the launch of short courses related to "ethical hacking" and forensic investigation of cyber-crimes.

IHPI president and chief executive Leonardo A. Riingen said in an interview that the company decided to again offer its "Certified Ethical Hacking" (CEH) course because of the growing concern over computing security and the increasing demand for specialized skills.

"Ethical or 'legal' hackers refer to those who try to break into websites or networks (simulating an attack by a malicious hacker) with the consent of the owners," Riingen explained. "The aim is to discover the weaknesses of the systems so that owners could take further security measures."

To be a certified hacker, students will have to go through an intensive 21-module training course, which is supervised by the New York-based International Council of Electronic Commerce Consultants or EC-Council.

EC-Council also grants certifications for the graduates, who include people working for the United Nations, US Federal Bureau of Investigation, US Central Intelligence Agency, and US armed services as well as Microsoft and HP.

According to a promotional flyer, three of four hacking incidents were inside jobs. The most frequent problems were computer viruses, abuse of Internet access and website vandalism.

Also yesterday, Informatics introduced the "Computer Hacking Forensic Investigation" course, which involves detection of hacking attacks and proper extraction of evidence to report the crime and prevent future attacks.

"Computer forensics is simply the application of computer investigation and analysis techniques in the interests of determining potential legal evidence," Riingen said.

He said both short courses would equip graduates with detailed knowledge of the nature of attacks and methods that computer criminals use.

Call center for Muslims

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

CALL CENTERS ARE SPROUTING like mushrooms all over the country, and more Filipinos are getting trained or employed as call center agents.

Fueling the growth is the need of US companies to go abroad to source "sophisticated, mission-critical functions" due to a shortage of highly educated professionals in their country.

The Philippines has become a preferred destination for these American companies seeking to outsource jobs, according to a study by Duke University, in North Carolina, and consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton.

And for good reason, because the Philippines has one of the highest literacy rates in the East Asian and Pacific area, at 92 percent.

For companies seeking to outsource, lower costs, a high literacy rate and employee loyalty are among the Philippines' appealing factors.

Filipinos are also more attuned to Western culture than most Asians, thanks to a long history of contact with the United States, including several decades of American colonial rule.

Call center employees here, thus, find it easy to relate to Westerners and adapt to a variety of accents.

In Mindanao, the call center industry has just begun to take root.

Cagayan de Oro has three of the 10 call centers in Mindanao with over 800 call center representatives, while Davao has over 700 employees working in three call centers.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is also riding on the growth of the call center industry, and its labor can be trained to cater to companies in the Middle East.

To tap the potential of Muslims in ARMM to be employed as call center agents, Davao-based Call Center and Language School has started training Muslims in Barangay Waan, Cabantian, Davao City in partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) and barangay officials.

Waan is predominantly Muslim and is an hour's drive from the city proper.

The free training is aimed at creating awareness and expose the Muslims to the best call center management technology that will lead to better coaching and performance.

Training started in November last year. Trainees spend a month on English Language Proficiency lessons and another month on hands-on training in making and answering calls.

The first 51 participants are college graduates. Some had a career in teaching and banking, while others are unemployed. Now that they have finished their basic call center training, a new door has opened for them.

The Muslim graduates are now very happy with their achievements; they will have better access to job opportunities in the business process outsourcing sector with their skills—English grammar, pronunciation, articulation and diction.

One student said that she can now use her speaking skills to deal with foreign customers at the bank, although she is open to a career in the call center industry.

Another student, currently teaching Arabic studies in Waan, is excited to apply his learnings to his current profession.

One of the major challenges they encountered at the start of the program was learning to speak with a "neutral" accent.

Because of the training, they now boast of an improved accent, and are more confident about speaking in public.

The results of the training disprove the notion that ARMM workers have low level of skills and are not trainable.

Provided with proper access to information technology and the right training, this region can be a source of world-class workers.

Establishing contact centers in Muslim Mindanao will help generate sustainable jobs, reduce unemployment rate, and eventually bring down the poverty level in the region where armed conflict has slowed progress in the past.

The ARMM has one of the highest poverty incidence in the country, with 71.3 percent of the population living below the poverty threshold as of 2000. Although the poverty incidence decreased to 53.1 in 2003, ARMM remains the poorest region in the country.

The pilot training in Waan shows that Muslims too are interested in the call center training and perhaps in the future—a call center may locate in ARMM.

(Joji Ilagan Bian is a strong advocate for Mindanao; chair, Mindanaworld Foundation Inc.; Mindanao TVET; Mindanao Rep, Export Development Council; chair, Joji Ilagan Foundation; former chair of the Mindanao Business Council. E-mail comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

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CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION
(Head Office and Branches)
As of December 29, 2006

ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Items	P	2,755,378,534
Due from Bangko Sentral		13,227,650,144
Due from Other Banks		2,705,650,635
Interbank Loans Receivable		64,866,304,649
Trading Account Securities (Net)		3,258,908
Investments in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		31,337,036,370
Loans, Discounts & Advances (Net)		40,360,010,675
Equity Investments (Net)		624,861,000
Bank Premises, Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (Net)		4,742,572,260
Other Assets (Net)		23,759,029,676
Property Owned/Acquired		7,797,295,816
Others		15,961,733,860
TOTAL ASSETS	P	184,381,752,851
LIABILITIES		
Demand Deposits	P	49,266,123,035
Savings Deposits		20,212,230,093
Time Deposits		46,527,958,712
Special/Other Deposits		38,407,936
Due to Bangko Sentral		58,333,020
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		2,748,246,809
Bills Payable		21,959,401,209
BSP Rediscounts/Special Programs		33,686,412
Interbank Borrowings		19,068,970,877
Others		2,856,743,920
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits		1,190,274,728
Other Liabilities		22,303,539,046
Unsecured Subordinated Debt (Inclusive of Unamortized Premium/Discount)		1,287,100,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P	165,591,614,588
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		
Capital Stock	P	7,087,057,923
Surplus		11,632,219,220
Surplus Reserves		70,861,120
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	18,790,138,263
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	184,381,752,851
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit	P	1,146,533,641
Bills for Collection		749,473,383
Spot/Future Exchange Sold		12,487,359,799
Spot/Future Exchange Brought		7,003,763,086
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements		10,666,643,096
Invested in:		
Government Securities		4,227,248,005
Other Securities, Debt Instruments And Shares of Stock		1,150,252,590
Loans and Discounts		3,436,092,315
Other Assets		1,853,050,186
Accountabilities:		
Trust & Other Fiduciary		5,022,919,993
Common Trust Funds		5,024,145,169
Investment/Fund Management		619,577,934
Other Contingent Accounts		1,105,226,732
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	P	33,158,999,737

Other Information

1. Deposits of:		
a. Government	P	17,676,749,364
b. Banks		483,982,914
c. Trust Department		769,731,277
2. Compliance with Magna Carta Law		
a. Prescribed Ratio of Compliance for 6% (Small Enterprises)		8.61%
a. Prescribed Ratio of Compliance for 2% (Medium Enterprises)		3.69%
3. Amount of Non Performing Loans		7,990,547,571
4. Ratio of Non Performing Loans to Total Loan Portfolio		7.17%
5. Amount of Classified Loans and Other Risk Assets		12,261,801,748
6. General Provision for Loan Losses		672,103,348
7. Specific Provision for Loan Losses		5,606,646,482
8. Return on equity (ROE)		12.00%
9. Amount of DOSRI Loans/Advances		1,095,811,463
10. Ratio of DOSRI Loans/Advances to Total Loan Portfolio		0.98%
11. Amount of Past Due DOSRI Loans/Advances		
12. Ratio of Past Due DOSRI Loans/Advances to Total Loan Portfolio		

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
PASIG CITY) S.S.

We, Ana D. Lirio and Guia C. Lim of the above-mentioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above statement of condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

ANA D. LIRIO
First Vice President

GUIA C. LIM
Executive Vice President

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 25th day of January, 2007, affiants exhibiting to me their Community Tax No. 18924258 issued at Muntinlupa on February 13, 2006 and Community Tax No. 04694991 issued at Manila on January 19, 2007, respectively.

Doc No. 146
Page No. 31
Book No. V
Series of 2007

JILLAINE B. RONQUILLO-RAMOS
Notary Public for Pasig & Taguig
& Municipalities of San Juan & Pateros
Commission Expires Dec. 31, 2007
Appointment No. 37
IBP No. 664658 / 12-29-05 / RSM
PTR No. 3614237 / 12-29-05 / Rizal

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION
(Bank and its Subsidiaries and Affiliates)
As of December 29, 2006

ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Items	P	2,754,921,849
Due from Bangko Sentral		13,227,650,144
Due from Other Banks		2,705,650,635
Interbank Loans Receivable		64,866,304,649
Trading Account Securities (Net)		3,686,501
Investments in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		31,337,036,370
Loans, Discounts & Advances (Net)		40,360,010,675
Equity Investments (Net)		624,861,000
Bank Premises, Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (Net)		4,742,572,263
Other Assets (Net)		23,746,635,510
Property Owned/Acquired		7,797,295,816
Others		15,949,339,694
TOTAL ASSETS	P	184,369,329,596
LIABILITIES		
Demand Deposits	P	49,262,250,012
Savings Deposits		20,211,773,407
Time Deposits		46,527,958,712
Special/Other Deposits		38,407,936
Due to Bangko Sentral		58,333,020
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		2,748,246,809
Bills Payable		21,959,901,209
BSP Rediscounts/Special Programs		33,686,412
Interbank Borrowings		19,068,970,877
Others		2,857,243,920
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits		1,190,274,728
Other Liabilities		22,303,777,083
Unsecured Subordinated Debt (Inclusive of Unamortized Premium/Discount)		1,287,100,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P	165,588,022,916
Minority Interest In Allied Undertakings/Subsidiaries/Affiliates		1,431,347
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		
Capital Stock	P	7,087,057,923
Surplus		11,621,956,290
Surplus Reserves		70,861,120
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	18,779,875,333
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	184,369,329,596
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit	P	1,146,533,641
Bills for Collection		749,473,383
Spot/Future Exchange Sold		12,487,359,799
Spot/Future Exchange Brought		7,003,763,086
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements		10,666,643,096
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Other Information

1. Deposits of:		
a. Government	P	17,676,749,364
b. Banks		483,982,914
c. Trust Department		769,731,277
2. List of Bank's Financial Subsidiaries:		
a. UnionBank Currency Brokers Corporation		
b. UBP Securities, Inc.		
c. Interventure Capital Corporation		

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
PASIG CITY) S.S.

We, Ana D. Lirio and Guia C. Lim of the above-mentioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above statement of condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

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GUIA C. LIM
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DOJ advice sought on MRT deal

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE GOVERNMENT HAS SOUGHT the advise of the Department of Justice (DOJ) on how to take over the management and operations of the Metro Rail Transit (MRT-3) from the Sobrepeña-led Metro Rail Transit Corp., according to an official of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC).

The system is estimated to be worth $750 million to $800 million, DOTC Undersecretary for Railways Guiling Mamondiong told reporters.

He said the government intends to finance the buyout by floating bonds and taking out concessional loans.

"(The buyout) could happen anytime this year because the Office of the President has already decided to implement it, as recommended by the (Department of Finance)," the official said.

In August 2005, the government issued Memorandum Order No. 181 to create an inter-agency committee headed by the DOF to draft a takeover strategy for MRT-3.

Mamondiong said the officials tasked to implement the buyout have met with DOJ officials. The justice officials are expected to issue their legal opinion next month.

Mamondiong said that the government sees the takeover, or so-called reverse privatization, as a way to save on fare subsidies and interest payments to the MRTC, which built the MRT3 under a build-lease-transfer scheme.

MRT3 general manager Roberto Lastimoso earlier said that the current fare average of P12 should actually be around P60, and the government was subsidizing the difference.

Lastimoso also said that the MRT3, which runs daily from North Avenue in Quezon City to Taft in Pasay City, that the monthly revenue generated by MRT-3, was not enough to cover the P250 million in maintenance fees which the government shells out each month.

Shares . . .

From page B1

budget deficit figure for 2006.

Top-traded PLDT fell P25 to P2,605 while Ayala Land Inc. retreated 50 centavos to P17.

Megaworld Corp. rose 20 centavos to P2.85.

Food and beverage firm San Miguel Corp.'s A and B shares were unchanged at P63.50 and P75.00 respectively. *AFP*

Gov't sees . . .

From page B1

the PTIC stake, the government is expected to exceed the P25.7-billion target, he said.

The official said that there are other state-owned assets that have been lined up for privatization, but whose chances of being sold this year are slim. These include the government's stake in Meralco, its shares in San Miguel Corp., and the Philippine Postal Corp.

Another P1 billion worth of privatization proceeds is likewise expected to be turned in this year. This will be in the form of installment payments from previously sold government assets, he said.

Michelle V. Remo

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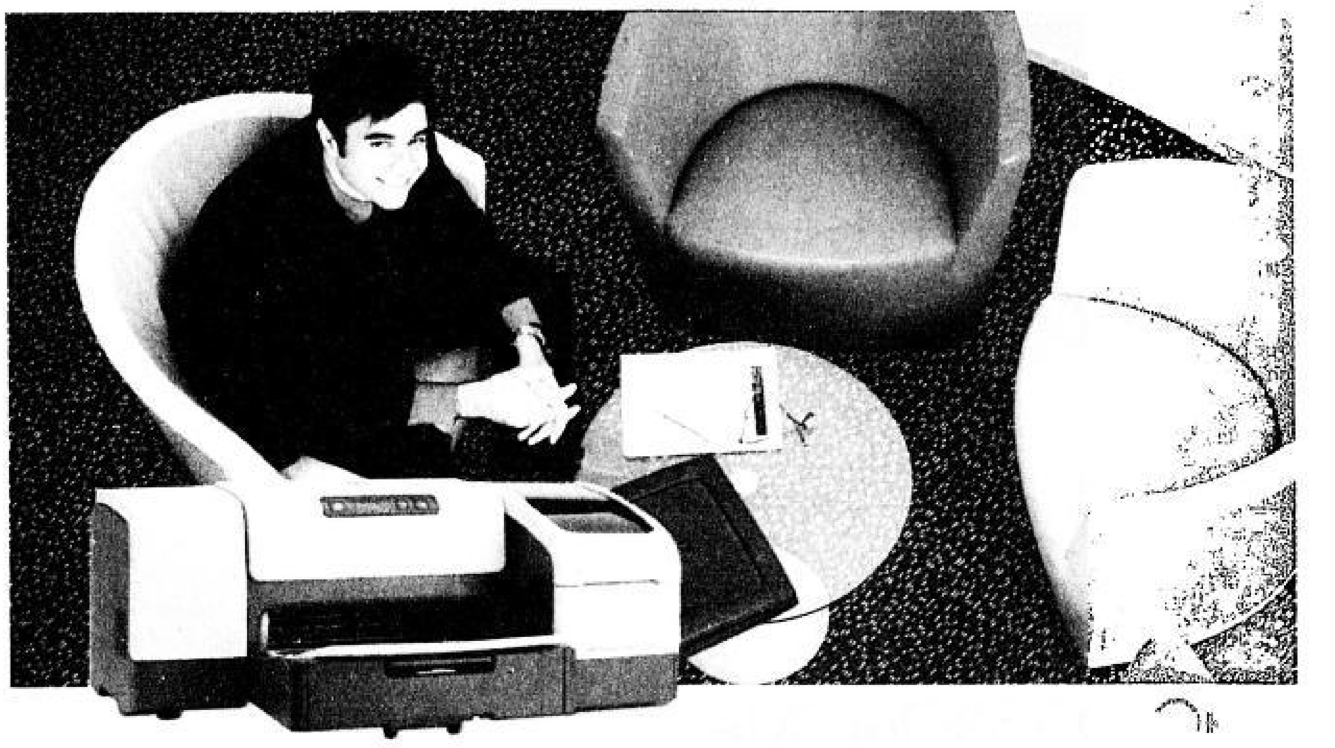

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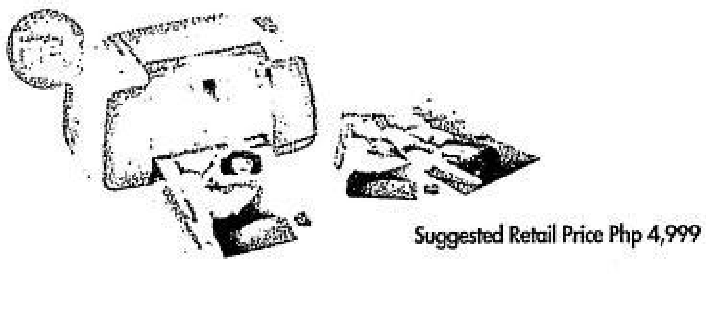

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NISSAN

Pre-need sales seen picking up

Industry expects a turnaround in '07

By Daxim L. Lucas

SALES OF PRE-NEED PLANS ARE EXPECTED to finally start increasing this year after a steady decline in the past years, according to the Philippine Federation of Pre-need Plan Companies Inc. (PFPPCI).

In a briefing, PFPPCI president Juan Miguel M. Vasquez said he expected sales to "improve" this year, after the crisis that beset the industry and resulted in the collapse of certain companies forced weaker players out of the market.

"There will always be a need for our products and we expect this to rise along with the economy," he said. He, however, declined to divulge the industry's projections.

Vasquez said 2007 would be the turnaround year for the industry whose sales had been affected by the high-profile collapse of certain pre-need firms, including College Assurance Plan and Pacific Plans. Both firms specialized in selling the so-called "open ended" educational plans where the companies guaranteed to shoulder the tuition expenses of beneficiaries regardless of inflation.

The PFPPCI head said these open ended educational plans now accounted for a small portion of the pre-need industry's obligations, after companies stopped offering them to buyers a few years ago.

"Back in 2003, open ended educational plans made up 20 percent of the market," he said. "Now, I think it's down to only 16 to 17 percent, and is continuously shrinking."

The high-profile crisis, however, has tainted the rest of the industry—which includes pension and memorial plans—despite the fact that other sectors have performed well.

"No other sector was affected by this crisis," he stressed, adding that all benefits for pension, memorial and even fixed-value education plans have been fully paid out by the industry association's members.

Next week, the industry association will launch a campaign aimed at restoring the public's confidence in pre-need products.

Data from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) validated some of Vasquez' optimism.

Collections of pre-need firms continued to decline in November last year due to poor pension plan payments even as sales increased during the same period, the SEC said.

SEC data showed that initial collections made as of November 2006 amounted to P182.6 million, representing a 7.85-percent decline from the P198.2 million collected during the same period last year.

The decline was attributed mainly to the 16.3 percent year-on-year drop in pension plan collections.

Initial collection refers to the first payment made by the plan holder upon purchase of a pre-need plan, depending on the mode of payment.

The SEC data, however, showed that total sales of the industry rose by 13.85 percent to P1.68 billion in November 2006 from only P1.48 billion in the same month last year.

Atlas exports nickel to China

ATLAS CONSOLIDATED MINING AND Development Corp. has shipped its first batch of nickel ore to China from its mining site in Palawan, marking the trial phase of the project.

In a statement to the stock exchange, Atlas said the 19,000 tons of nickel ore shipped to China came from its Berong mines. It said the payload was the "first trial metallurgical shipment" of laterite nickel ore, and that further shipments were planned for this month.

"We are delighted that one of the company's assets has at last become productive after years of dormancy," Atlas chair and president Alfredo Ramos said in a statement. "The Berong area hosts world-class nickel laterite resources which can generate valuable revenue to the company as well as significant economic and social benefits to the local community and the island of Palawan."

Atlas said the demand for laterite nickel ore continued to outstrip supply, with prices having risen continuously over the previous year.

Nickel is used to produce stainless steel for industrial and commercial applications. The country hosts one of the largest nickel deposits in Southeast Asia, while China has emerged as the largest market for nickel in recent years due to its surging economy.

Atlas said about 100,000 tons of nickel ore were now stockpiled and ready for shipment.

Ramos said the mining and hauling of the ore was running at the planned rate of 2,000 tons per day and this would be increased to 4,000 tons. *Daxim L. Lucas*

Apex warned over violations

THE PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE (PSE) has threatened to take punitive action against listed firm Apex Mining Co. Inc. (Apex), over the company's repeated violations of disclosure rules and continued failure to hold an annual stockholders' meeting.

In a statement, PSE president and CEO Francis Lim said the exchange was forced to send a "strongly worded" letter to Apex after it counted no less than 11 instances when the mining firm violated both PSE rules and the company's own by-laws.

Lim ordered Apex to strictly comply with the rules of the PSE or face commensurate penalties.

Among the violations Apex is guilty of is its continued failure to hold an annual stockholders meeting as stipulated in its own by-laws.

Apex was supposed to hold its annual meeting on June 28, 2006. It has, however, postponed the stockholders meeting six times last year.

The exchange said the mining firm also failed to comply with the schedules on disclosures of material information to regulators. PSE counted five instances when the mining firm has disregarded disclosure rules. Its said the company's violations also included: Delayed submission of its 2005 annual report; delayed submission of its quarterly report for the first quarter of 2006; the delayed submission of the list of top 100 stockholders as of Dec. 31, 2006; the improper release of information about the company in the Crew Gold website prior to disclosure to the exchange, and the improper release of the update on the company's Masara Gold Mine.

In a letter to Apex Mining president Cleto Gamolo, Lim said the bourse found the company's failure to hold a stockholders meeting a very serious lapse. *Daxim L. Lucas*

'06 budget deficit ...

From page B1

ment of Finance reported yesterday.

Of last year's total revenue, the Bureau of Internal Revenue accounted for P651.9 billion. The Bureau of Customs likewise contributed P198.2 billion in taxes and duties, while the Bureau of the Treasury came through with P51.9 billion. Other government agencies accounted for the remaining P50.9 billion, according to data from the DOF.

On the expenditure side, the amount spent last year was P58.1 billion lower than the P1.099 trillion set under the fiscal program for 2006.

The underspending was primarily due to the failure of Congress to pass the proposed national budget for 2006, which forced the government to operate on a much lower budget that was passed in 2005.

Analysts from the financial market expect that the government's fiscal performance will translate to an improvement in the country's credit rating.

Foreign credit-rating firms had visited the country recently to assess the country's fiscal and economic climate.

But Teves said he did not want to make a guess on how the firms would rate the country.

"We (economic officials) are not obsessed with the ratings," Teves said. "What we want to focus on is meeting our fiscal targets."

An upgrade in the country's credit rating would just be a consequence of better fiscal numbers, he added.

At present, the Philippines is rated at just below investment grade. However, the outlook of all the major international ratings firms has recently been changed from "negative" to "stable" due to the perception that the country would mark a lower-than-programmed deficit for 2006.

A "stable" outlook means that the country is secure from having a credit rating downgrade, at least in the near term.

Teves said the government for the moment would stick to its P63-billion deficit target for 2007, even though the country's budget gap last year reached P62.2 billion.

The finance chief said he would expect circumstances in 2006 to be different from that in 2007.

He explained that the government was forced to operate on a reenacted budget last year.

This year, the government is expected to maximize its expenditure limits now that the proposed national budget of P1.18 trillion has been approved, Teves added. *With a report from AFP*

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of Feb. 1, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7	7.1	7	7.1	20,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	51	52.5	51	52.5	4,047,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	72	72.5	71.5	72.5	1,656,700
China Banking Corp.	695	800	695	750	16,030
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	400
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	2,610,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	90	92.5	90	92	216,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	59	60.5	59	60.5	4,073,800
Philippine National Bank	47.5	48	47.5	48	37,500
Phil. Savings Bank	49.5	50	49.5	50	31,800
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	40	40	39	39	251,600
Security Bank Corp.	76	76.5	75.5	75.5	325,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	60	60	59.5	60	23,900
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Air Kimeng Fin. Corp.	2.6	2.75	2.6	2.75	46,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	4.95	4.95	4.8	4.9	522,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	5	5	5	5	36,000
First Metro Invest. Corp	31.5	32	31.5	32	20,100
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.62	323,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	450	470	450	455	10,910
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2065	2075	2065	2075	2,410
Ivantage Corp.	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.6	1,630,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.9	4.95	4.85	4.95	19,331,000
First Gen Corp.	55.5	58.5	55.5	58	812,800
First Phil Hldgs Corp	75.5	77.5	75.5	76.5	533,500
Manila Electric Co. A	70	70.5	70	70	107,000
Manila Electric Co. B	71	71	70	70	2,253,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.1	9.2	9	9.1	4,486,000
Petron Corp.	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.45	12,262,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	600,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.2	1.24	1.2	1.22	155,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.55	3.55	3,000
CADP Group Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	10,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21	23	21	23	688,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42.5	43	42	43	543,300
Pancake House Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	10,000
RFM Corp.	1.3	1.36	1.3	1.34	447,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.8	2.85	2.8	2.85	344,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	980,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63.5	64	63	63.5	89,400
San Miguel Corp. B	75	75	74.5	75	424,700
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.04	2.06	2.02	2.04	778,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19	19	18.5	18.5	4,267,700
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.3	1.3	1.28	1.28	16,867,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.45	4.65	4.45	4.6	2,374,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8	8	8	8	8,340,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	5,000
Republic Cement Corp.	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	380,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5	5.2	5	5.1	7,368,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	10,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.81	0.81	0.8	0.8	13,350,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.27	0.3	0.26	0.29	40,050,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	80,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	28,000,000
Ayala Corp.	630	630	620	630	137,110
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	280,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.2	8.2	8.1	8.2	20,491,000
Alliance Global Group Inc	9	9	8.5	9	15,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	55,800,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.2	1,102,000
APC Group Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	3,260,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	689,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.28	1.34	1.28	1.34	13,700,000
Pal Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	56,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	25,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	24,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	3.05	3.1	3	3.1	22,262,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	7.2	7.4	7.2	7.3	4,759,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.4	9,303,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	400,000
House of Investments Inc.	3.1	3.3	3.05	3.15	4,899,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.25	12.25	12	12.25	229,500
Medco Holdings	0.35	0.36	0.34	0.35	4,300,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	5.1	5.1	4.9	5	47,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	2	2	1.96	1.98	1,160,000
Pacifica	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	24,200,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	60,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.7	0.72	0.7	0.72	1,310,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	2,800,000
SM Investments Corp.	370	375	367.5	370	666,110
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	100,000
Vivant Corp.	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	20,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.14	2,680,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	17.5	17.5	17	17	8,534,700
Belle Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.2	1.22	522,000
A Brown Company Inc.	2.1	2.1	1.98	1.98	6,966,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.48	960,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.45	3.4	3.45	355,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.94	1.98	1.9	1.9	116,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.76	1.86	1.76	1.86	155,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	450,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.72	0.76	0.72	0.74	132,230,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.66	1.6	1.66	143,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	19,600,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	400,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	20,000
Interport Res.	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	16,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.52	0.54	0.52	0.54	5,190,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.78	0.84	0.78	0.84	8,900,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.65	2.85	2.65	2.85	99,679,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.7	4.75	4.7	4.75	96,000
Mrc Allied Ind. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	820,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.04	2.04	2.04	2.04	20,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	16.25	16.5	16	16.5	1,921,300
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.66	0.66	0.65	0.65	4,050,000
SM Development Corp.	3.45	3.6	3.45	3.55	3,511,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11.75	12.5	11.75	12.5	10,536,400
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.59	0.6	0.59	0.59	450,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1,000,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	22.25	22.75	22.25	22.75	159,200
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	1.92	1.94	1.9	1.94	3,754,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1430	1445	1410	1415	24,640
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.8	4,477,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2620	2620	2590	2605	436,560
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.35	0.32	0.34	28,000,000
Diversified Fin. Network	2.55	2.55	2.5	2.5	15,000
Imperial Res.	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.021	500,000
Ionics Inc.	2.85	2.85	2.8	2.8	1,116,000
IPVG Corp.	3.75	3.85	3.75	3.85	49,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	4,500,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	3,100,000
Music Semiconductors Corp	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	65,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.34	2.36	2.28	2.3	152,000
Philweb Corp. .0350	0.03	6.0	35.0	36 4	2,600,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.56	1.56	436,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	24	24	24	24	805,900
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	150,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	3,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.96	2.06	1.96	2.06	1,642,000
Manila Jockey Club	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	4,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	600,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.62	0.63	0.62	0.62	1,900,000
EDUCATION					
iPeople Inc.	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	70,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.06	424,000
Paxys Inc.	24	24.25	24	24.25	611,100
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.4	5.6	5.4	5.5	1,066,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.6	557,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	101,600,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.1	9.3	9	9.2	622,000
Benguet Corp. A	11.25	12.5	11.25	12	365,900
Benguet Corp. B	35	35	35	35	2,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.55	2.55	2.55	2.55	2,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	2,260,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	1,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.025	306,700,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.027	0.028	0.027	0.028	79,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.013	36,100,000
Philex Mining Corp.	3.95	4	3.85	3.9	4,533,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	17.5	18.75	17.5	18.5	149,500
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.76	0.78	0.75	0.77	4,690,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.54	1.58	1.52	1.54	4,222,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	10,260,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	261,100,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	1,000,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	701,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	132,700

Currencies

February 1, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.767106	1.000000	48.9020
Japan	Yen	0.006358	0.008288	0.4053
United Kingdom	Pound	1.507057	1.964600	96.0729
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098243	0.128070	6.2629
Switzerland	Franc	0.616893	0.804182	39.3261
Canada	Dollar	0.652468	0.850557	41.5939
Singapore	Dollar	0.499744	0.651466	31.8580
Australia	Dollar	0.593828	0.774114	37.8557
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.034927	2.652731	129.7239
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204540	0.266638	13.0391
Brunei	Dollar	0.498121	0.649351	31.7546
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000110	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.022044	0.028736	1.4052
UAE	Dirham	0.208873	0.272287	13.3154
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.303600	63.7486
Korea	Won	0.000815	0.001063	0.0520
China	Yuan**	0.098678	0.128636	6.2906
Argentina	Peso	0.247055	0.322061	15.7494
Brazil	Real	0.361332	0.471032	23.0344
Denmark	Kroner	0.134140	0.174865	8.5512
India	Rupee	0.017406	0.022691	1.1096
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.219173	0.285714	13.9720
Mexico	New Peso	0.069746	0.090921	4.4462
New Zealand	Dollar	0.525631	0.685213	33.5083
South Africa	Rand	0.105749	0.137855	6.7414
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023301	0.030375	1.4854

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Jan. 31, 2007
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.
** Asian time closing rate as of Jan. 31, 2007

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON AUDIT
Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines

Procurement of Services for the Printing of COA Coffeetable Book and COA Collection of Masterpieces, Paintings, Sculpture and other Antique Furnishings

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The Commission on Audit intends to apply the sum of Eight Milion One Hundred Eighty Two Thousand Five Hundred pesos (P8,182,500.00) broken down as follows:

ITEM	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	SUB-ABC
1	COA Coffeetable Book	Hardbound 2,000 copies Softbound 10,000 copies	P7,500,000.00
2	COA Collection of Masterpieces, Paintings, Sculpture and other Furnishings	1,500 copies	682,500.00
	Total ABC		P8,182,500.00

being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Procurement of Services involving the Printing of COA Coffeetable Book and COA Collection of Masterpieces, Paintings, Sculpture and other Antique Furnishings. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the Bid opening.

2. Interested Bidders may obtain a complete set of Bidding Documents starting February 5, 2007 to February 26, 2007, upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Five Thousand pesos (P5,000.00) from the BAC Secretariat, c/o Ms. Mila R. Penas, Procurement Division, COA Central Office, Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City.
3. The Commission on Audit will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on February 9, 2007, 2:00 p.m. at the BAC Office, Room 102, Ground Floor, Former SAADO Building, COA Complex, Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City.
4. Deadline for the submission of Bids shall be on February 27, 2007, 2:00 p.m. at BAC Office, Room 102, Ground Floor former SAADO Building, COA Complex, Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City. Immediately after the deadline, bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
5. The Bids and Awards Committee of the Commission on Audit reserves the right to reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) AsCom. ARCADIO B. CUENCO, JR.
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Feb. 2, 2007)

PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
A Subsidiary of Bases Conversion and Development Authority

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Republic of the Philippines

Construction Management Services for the Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase I

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC), a subsidiary of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), through the PPMC 2007 Corporate Operating Budget, intends to apply the sum oftwenty six **million sixty nine thousand seven hundred thirty two and 50/100 Pesos (Php 26,069,732.50)** being the **Approved budget for the Contract (ABC)** to payments under the contract for Construction Management Services for the Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase I. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the opening of the financial proposals.

PPMC now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs)/Expressions of Interest from potential bidders to apply for eligibility and short listing for Construction Management Services for the Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase I.

Eligibility Documents shall be issued and made available to interested applicants upon payment of non-refundable fee of five thousand pesos (Php 5,000.00) at the PPMC, Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., on February 2, 2007 to February 8, 2007.

Interested applicants shall submit their LOIs/Expressions of Interest together with their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the SBAC at the PPMC, Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union on or before 2:00 P.M. February 14, 2007. Opening of eligibility documents shall be on February 14, 2:30 P.M. at the above address in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend. Applications for eligibility shall be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. Only those that are short listed shall be entitled to submit bids.

The BAC shall draw up the short list of consultants from those who have submitted their LOIs/Expressions of Interest and have been determined as eligible both in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A). The short list of prospective bidders shall consist of a maximum of five (5) consultants. The criteria and rating system for short listing are:

Firm Experience and Track Record	**50 points**
Technical Staff Experience	**50 points**

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to Filipino citizens or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only bids from short listed consultants shall be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in the Eligibility Documents. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, the contract shall only be awarded to the Highest Rated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

PPMC shall evaluate bids using the **Quality-Cost Based Evaluation/Selection (QCBE/QCBS)**. The criteria and rating system for the evaluation of bids shall be provided in the Instructions to Bidders.

Interested Eligible and Short listed Bidders may obtain further information from the PPMC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on February 20, 2007 to February 26, 2007.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check and short listing upon presentation of the Notice of Eligibility and Short listing to the SBAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of ten thousand pesos (Php 10,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be issued and made available at the PPMC, Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on February 20, 2007 to February 26, 2007. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative.

PPMC shall hold a Pre-Bid Conference and open to all Eligible and Short listed Bidders at 2:00 P.M., on February 27, 2007 at the San Fernando Airport, Terminal Building, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union

Eligible and Short listed Bidders must submit their Bids to the SBAC at the PPMC Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union on or before 2:00 P.M., March 12, 2007. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form and in the amount specified in the Bidding Documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on March 12, 2007, 2:30 P.M. at the above address in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend.

The contract shall be completed within four hundred thirty five days (435) from the issuance of Notice to Proceed.

The PPMC reserves the right to reject any and all bids, annul the bidding process, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone
Poro, San Fernando City, La Union
Tel. (072) 242-4016
Fax (072) 242-0683
ppmc@sflu.com

(Sgd.) Atty. ANTHONY C. MANGUIAT
Chairman
Special Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – February 2, 2007)

E-mail: business@inquirer.com.ph

BUSINESS *Friday*

Business Features Editor **Margie Quimpo-Espino**

What's in store for retailers this year

2007 expected to be better than challenging 2006

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

PHILIPPINE RETAILERS WERE just about ready to write off Christmas of 2006 as one of the worst in recent memory when sales started to pick up in the second week of December last year and steadily rose up to Christmas day, when most Filipinos open their wallets wide to give gifts to their friends and family.

Since Filipinos have the reputation around the world for celebrating the longest Christmas season, starting as soon as the calendar turns to the "ber" months in September and ending with the Feast of the Three Kings in January, retailers bank on December to deliver the much-needed spike in sales.

Christmas 2006 did not disappoint, and the market performance has raised hopes that 2007 will be a much better year for the industry.

Retailers badly need the mood to turn around as the past year has been challenging to say the least.

This is because of the combined dampening effects of the increase in the Value Added Tax on goods and services from 10 percent to 12 percent; the spike in oil prices in import-dependent Philippines; and the usual political bickering.

These have all caused many buyers away from the malls and shopping centers and put their money in savings accounts instead.

Philippine retailers, however, remain optimistic and look forward to a better year ahead.

GONZALES

Johnlu Koa, founder and chief executive of French Baker, one of the leading food chains in the Philippines, says in an interview that he was looking to add five to six new stores to his 31 branches this year because he expected the economy to adjust to the VAT increase and the political rumblings to quiet down.

Koa adds that the drop in the oil prices to an average of $62 a barrel, from a high of over $80 a barrel, should make consumers less wary of price spikes and encourage them to go out and buy goods and services.

There is some consensus among retailers that the industry really got a beating last year. The sales were there but the margins were not because of rising costs," Koa explains, "but we are still very optimistic about good prospects this year."

Generoso Villanueva, managing director of gadgets distributor Microwarehouse Corp. and Mobile 1 shares the view of Koa, saying that the retailers catering to the top income brackets were in the doldrums last year.

"Things were not so great last year because the top market did not grow, although we still expect to sell as much as last year," Villanueva says.

He says his colleagues at the Young Entrepreneurs Organization were perplexed by the weak sales because a significant portion of young graduates were being snapped up by the growing business process outsourcing industry.

That means more people bringing home hefty paychecks.

"I would not want to hazard a guess but perhaps their money is going to food and mobile phone loads instead of the more expensive goods," Villanueva says.

But like Koa, Villanueva believes that 2007 would be a good year for the industry, with political concerns easing and the Philippine peso appreciating in value against the US dollar.

The macroeconomic indicators for the Philippines are certainly something to cheer about.

The government expects the economy to grow by at least 5.5 percent next year, while keeping inflation down to just 5 percent.

Add to that the over $13 billion in remittances sent in by the growing legion of overseas Filipino workers.

All these augur well for the retail industry in 2007, says Alegria Limjoco, vice president of the Philippine Franchise Association and vice chairman of the Philippine Retailers Association.

"Retailers have been talking to each other and comparing notes. The general sentiment is that 2007 will be a better year," Limjoco says.

She points to the generally good Christmas sales as a primary indicator. She says that Christmas 2006 was the first time that sales grew by about 10 percent in the past three years.

She adds that remittances were a major contributor to the growth, but also because more money is being spent on goods other than loads for cellular phones in text-crazy Philippines.

"We are also looking forward to the government spending a lot on infrastructure in 2006, which will mean more jobs and employment," Limjoco says, "with more people employed in all parts of the economy, it should mean more retail sales."

KOA

Limjoco says PRA expected the tourism sector to continue bringing in people to the shopping malls. She also expects the food and fashion industries to continue doing well, as well as the beauty and wellness sectors.

"More and more Filipinos are out there and want to look good, they want to accentuate their positive feelings, which partly explained the growth of the wellness and beauty sector," she says.

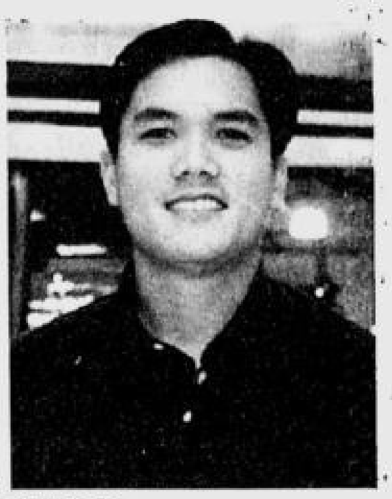
Toby Claudio of the Toby's retail chain with 52 branches, can vouch for the growth in the wellness industry. He sees it in the growing sales of exercise equipment and sports apparel in the Toby's stores all over the Philippines.

Claudio says in an interview that sales started picking up as early as July this year, and the growth was evident in all categories—from high-end exercise equipment to expensive footwear and gym apparel.

"With these trends in fitness, we are looking forward to a very good summer this year," Claudio says, "perhaps it's because Filipinos are becoming more health conscious."

Claudio says that the Toby's stores saw Christmas sales started as early as the first week of December, which was quite early considering that previous years saw sales picking up only starting the 15th of December.

"Christmas started early in 2006," Claudio says, "and all our indicators show that 2007 should be a good year because the spending is there."



CLAUDIO

Annie Gonzales, whose company distributes the popular Havaianas footwear in the Philippines, also says that 2006 was a very good year.

"2006 was an extremely successful year for us and our outlook for [this] year is very positive," Gonzales says.

"We are confident that 2007 will be just as fruitful, especially for businesses that continue to innovate and offer novel concepts to the consumer," she adds.

She adds that the positive trend is that the spending is not just confined to Metro Manila, but spread across to the provinces, which is likely due to the sending of precious US dollars from abroad.

Gonzales adds that buying power in the provincial retail market was bound to become even stronger.

Most OFWs come more from the provinces than from the Philippine capital of Metro Manila.

If the government does meet its target of posting a Gross Domestic Product growth in 2007 of at least 5.5 percent, then there should really be enough reasons for Philippine retailers to be optimistic about.

The growth may be uneven, but there will be growth, nonetheless. And that is what everybody is looking out for.

Japanese cafe serves Western food

FAMILY RESTAURANTS IN Japan served as the inspiration to the owners of the new Tokyo Cafe at the Mall of Asia.

"We are the Philippines' only Japanese style family restaurant," says Jean Delgado, general manager of Pepper Lunch Inc., owner of the cafe.

The company started early last year, and is managed by a team of gourmands with a collective experience of two decades in the food beverage industry.

Jean adds that they put much thought into deciding whether Filipinos were ready for a Japanese-named resto serving Western food.

The restaurant serves Western dishes such as pizza, pasta and sandwiches, and hot plates instead of traditional Japanese cuisine.

But then, "we thought that the market was ready for such a concept. Filipinos are known to be keen about hospitality and relaxation, and their appreciation for Western cuisine is also very evident."

They named it Tokyo Café after the coffee beans from Japan, supposed to be among the best in the world because of its discriminating market.

The word café was the closest they could get to the translation of Japanese family restaurant—"coffee house wouldn't do justice to the food; restaurant would undermine our excellent coffee offerings."

"It took us a long time to finally come up with the design and food selection that will complement the name and market we are targeting," says Jean. "These include families, businessmen, young couples, professionals and single people."

When the Sy family invited them to the Mall of Asia, Tokyo Café did not hesitate to put up their first branch there.

"We believe that the venue at the Mall of Asia will be the best launching pad to introduce a brand that would set a new trend that would make a mark in the food service in the Philippines." She adds that SM Malls have been a crowd drawer nationwide, as visiting the malls has become a lifestyle to many Filipinos.

"You can distinguish our café for its modern design—crisp white interiors and contemporary furniture," says Jean.

Not to be missed are its unique coffee offerings that combine the espresso method and the traditional Japanese "drip" method. In the latter, hot water is slowly poured over ground coffee, which makes for a full-bodied taste. The drip method uses a paper filter to separate grounds from brewed coffee.

In brewing, water is heated in one container, then hot water would drip into the minced coffee. This creates a purer coffee taste, and a dried freshly brewed smell.

Jean and her group believe that the food business is booming here in the Philippines because Filipinos love to eat and always like to try something new.

Getting the ORs

TAX-FILES

By Clarizza L. Doloroso and Jose A. Osana
SGV & Co.

IN THE SIMPLE ORDER OF things, higher consumer spending should also mean higher tax collection for the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), which in turn should result in better public service and facilities. But we do not live in a perfect world. Unfortunately, there are factors which could prevent the BIR from collecting higher taxes, and one of them is the failure, through inadvertence or not, of business establishments and professionals to issue BIR registered invoices or official receipts to customers. This is an area where consumers can help the government. Here are some basic things to remember.

Invoices and official receipts are a must.

The issuance of an invoice or official receipt is a requirement for every sale of goods or services valued at P25 or more. As a consumer, it is part of your "Bill of Rights" to receive an invoice or official receipt for your purchase. If the business establishment or professional forgets or does not issue an invoice or OR after you paid for goods or services, you have the right to ask for one.

Not only must the business establishment or professional issue an invoice or OR, it is equally important that these are registered with the BIR.

The issuance of BIR-registered invoices and ORs serve several purposes: first, it assures the consumer that the business establishment or professional will be forced to declare it for tax purposes; second, it serves as a paper trail which the BIR can use to check if the business establishment or professional is correctly declaring its income; and third, it could be the consumer's ticket to P1 million (discussed in more detail below).

To the owner of the business, an invoice or OR could ensure that the cashier will properly report all amounts received from customers.

Invoices and ORs must be BIR-registered.

How will you know if the invoice or OR is registered with the BIR?

There are two types of invoices or official receipts—the "manual invoice or receipt" and the "cash register receipt."

A manual invoice or receipt comes in small booklets printed by a BIR-registered printer. It indicates the name, address, and Tax Identification Number (TIN) of the business establishment or professional and is serially numbered. Printed on every BIR-registered manual invoice or receipt is the phrase "Authority to Print" followed by a BIR-assigned serial number and date, as well as the name and address of the printer on the bottom portion.

A cash register receipt is issued by cash register machines or computer terminals like the ones you find in big supermarkets and department stores. Each BIR-registered cash register receipt also indicates the name, address and TIN of the business establishment or professional, a "Permit No." followed by a BIR-assigned serial number, and the words, "This serves as an offical receipt."

The BIR-registered cash register machine or computer terminal has a BIR sticker prominently indicating: "This cash register machine is authorized to issue a cash register receipt."

If the manual invoice or receipt that you receive does not indicate the name, address, and TIN of the business establishment or professional, as well as the BIR "Authority to Print," then you know that it is not BIR-registered even if it says "official receipt" in bold letters and even if it has serial numbers. Same thing if the cash register machine does not have any BIR sticker on it, or if the cash register receipt does not contain the necessary information. But, don't throw the manual invoice or receipt / cash register receipt just yet; it could be your ticket to a million pesos.

With the ease of access to high-tech printers and scanners, fake but authentic looking invoices or official receipts proliferate in the market. Maybe, the BIR should consider requiring the use of security paper or watermarks for BIR-registered invoices and receipts.

Invoices and ORs are different animals.

Time and again the BIR reminds everyone to "ask for your receipt." In fact, every business establishment or professional is required to display prominently in their business premises the orange BIR stickers reminding customer to "ask for your receipt."

While the reminder is for the customer to ask for a receipt, the requirement is for a seller to issue an invoice or an OR depending on what was sold. The distinction was made clear in 2005 when Republic Act No. 9337 specifically required what document should be issued for a particular transaction. Simply put, a seller is required to issue a BIR-registered invoice for sale of goods, and a BIR-registered official receipt for sale of service.

Thus, when you go to a hardware store, department store or supermarket, expect to receive an invoice and not an official receipt. Even if there is a sticker telling you to "ask for your receipt," the seller is not required to issue any official receipt.

On the other hand, if you pay for services or rent something, the business establishment or professional rendering the service or leasing the property should issue you a BIR-registered official receipt and not an invoice.

No invoice or OR? Report to the BIR.

If a business establishment or professional refuses to issue a BIR-registered invoice or official receipt, the best recourse is for you to report the incident to the BIR. Yes, the BIR listens!

BIR revenue district offices welcome reports of violations in the issuance (or non-issuance) of invoices or ORs. Violations include the seller negotiating the price with the customer by saying "no 12 percent VAT if no invoice or official receipt."

In addition, the BIR has opened an e-mail facility to receive complaints or reports of cases of non-issuance of invoices and official receipts by business establishments and professionals. You can send an e-mail to no-or-complaint@bir.gov.ph and let the BIR know the name and address of the business establishment or professional that failed or refused to give you an invoice or official receipt. In due course, BIR examiners will investigate the business establishment or professional and impose the appropriate penalties.

With or without receipts, you could be a millionaire!

There are two ways you could be a millionaire—join the raffle "Premyo sa Resibo" or report violations of the Tax Code to the BIR.

In "Premyo sa Resibo," you can send a text message to the BIR to enter the raffle. The prize for the lucky sender is P1 million. You have to include in your text message the business establishment/professional's TIN, the invoice or official receipt number, and the amount paid which should be at least P100.

If you don't have any invoice or official receipt because the business establishment refused to issue you one, or if you received an invoice or official receipt which is not registered with the BIR, you can file a confidential information with the nearest BIR office. If, after investigation, the BIR is able to substantiate your allegations and collect taxes from the violator, then you will be eligible for a reward of 10 percent of the taxes and penalties collected, up to a maximum of P1 million.

If you don't win in either case, just keep in mind that by doing your part and being vigilant in asking for invoices and official receipts, you already contribute to the correct declaration and payment of taxes. Enjoy your shopping!

TeleTech Inaugurates Bacolod City BPO Center

SPEAK ENGLISH
ACE

TeleTech, a global leader in business process outsourcing and a pioneer in the call center business, has inaugurated its customer management center (CMC) in Bacolod City—its first in Western Visayas.

Located at the Robinsons Metro Bacolod right across the city airport, TeleTech occupies 7,000 square meters and provides world-class amenities for over 1,200 employees.

"We are proud to set foot in Bacolod. This is a success story for TeleTech not just in the Philippines but across our global operations," according to Maulik Parekh, Vice President and General Manager of TeleTech in the Philippines. "In just six months, we have grown from zero to 1,200 employees. Our clients are delighted with the service levels of our Bacolod employees and this has contributed a lot to our fast expansion in this city," said Parekh.

Currently, TeleTech Bacolod serves three North American clients in the information technology, telecommunications and entertainment industries.

Apart from the usual production area, training rooms and language laboratories, TeleTech Bacolod has a 24 x 7 cafeteria and a coffee bar, a game room, sleeping quarters, and shower rooms.

"We want our employees to have areas where they can relax and have some fun with their colleagues at work," explained Site Director Michael Sendall.

Recruitment for the Bacolod customer management center began a year ago and by June 2006 the center opened its doors to the first wave of new hires, several of them came home to Bacolod from Manila and Cebu. Several of those original employees have been promoted to supervisory and managerial positions.

"TeleTech invests in human capital development programs that optimize the talents of its employees and reinforce a culture of excellence and a climate of work-place fun and dynamism," Sendall said.

Another significant factor that contributed to TeleTech's fast growth in Bacolod City is the presence of support systems for call center operations. Some of the critical support systems are: reliable transportation at night, energy and telecommunications infrastructures, and local government support.

"We are grateful to the local governments of Bacolod and Negros Occidental and the business community for their swift response to the needs of our business and our employees," expressed Parekh.

"When I first came over, I was told that Bacolod is not just known as sugarland; it is also the City of Smiles. Having lived here for the past eight months I have experienced first-hand the warmth and the hospitality of Bacolod people. I can truly say this is the City of Smiles! Add to this the population's high proficiency in English and the growing number of IT-trained graduates and we have a winning formula in this location," concluded Sendall.

Parekh says as a final note, "TeleTech Bacolod is a huge part of our business success in 2006. For 2007, we will focus on improvements in operations, up-training and promoting our employees, and being the 'employer of choice' in this country."

TeleTech Idol Jerome Kwan: seizing opportunities

WHEN JEROME KWAN STARTED WORKING WITH TeleTech Bacolod last August as a customer service representative, he was only thinking of getting a stable job. Little did he know that TeleTech would open opportunities for him to engage in his other passion-singing.

Not that Jerome dreams of pursuing a singing career. Far from it. For the 2006 TeleTech Idol singing champion from Bacolod who bested six others during the TeleTech Idol National finals last December 16 in Manila, showbiz is farthest from his mind.

Asked where he sees himself in 10 years' time, the 21-year-old Computer Science graduate from the University of St. La Salle says, "I should have been promoted by then and have a family of my own. Hopefully, I'd still be here in Bacolod City."

Jerome started singing at three, and his early influences in music were his mom, who enjoyed videoke, and his dad who was a band member.

Then he joined the St. Jude Parish Choir where he further honed his skills and where he is still a member up to now.

However, it was at the University of St. La Salle chorale where Jerome believes that he got the training and discipline in singing.

After that stint, it was all study and striving to land a good job, with singing relegated to the sidelines. "I won in some minor competitions—nothing really exciting," Jerome relates.

Until the TeleTech Idol opportunity came along. But even then, the ride was not easy. Initially, he missed qualifying in the semi-final round. But he got another opportunity to showcase his stuff when he was picked as the "wild card" entry to make it to the Bacolod finals. And that was it.

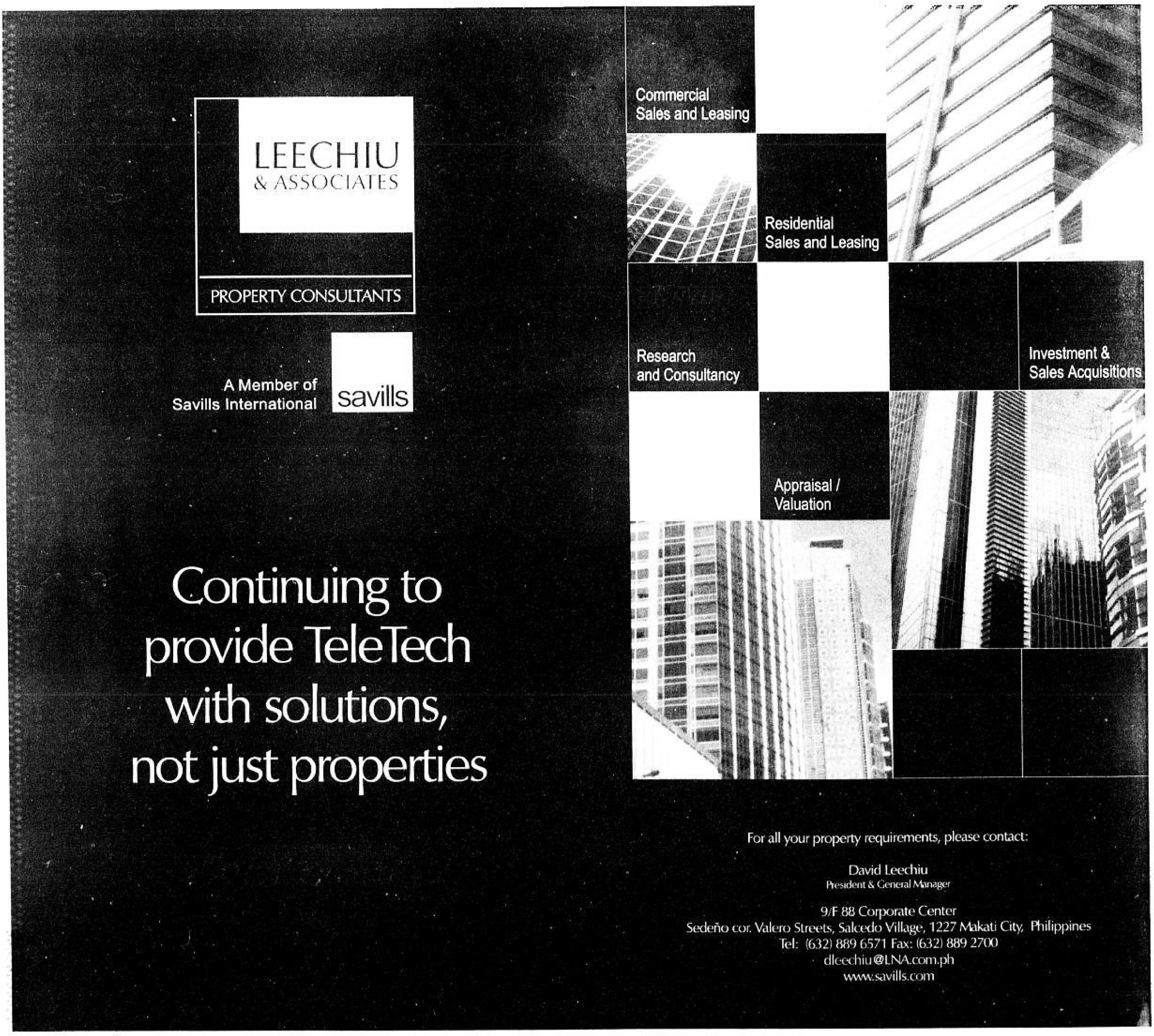
Apart from being focused on his job, Jerome is a fairly ordinary young man who spends quality time with his girlfriend. He goes for the music of Josh Groban, Usher, Boys II men, Mariah Carey, Martin Nievera and Lani Misalucha.

So how does he feel about winning? "I never thought I'd win. I sing well when I'm alone, not when in front of people. And during the finals in Manila I thought I'd choke when I realized there were so many people in the venue," Jerome confesses.

Commenting on his work at TeleTech, Jerome says "Working with this company has given me the opportunity to utilize what I learned from my Computer Science course, and at the same time, develop my talent in singing."

"So, what more can I ask for? I'm so blessed and I just want to make the most out of the opportunities that come my way," declares the shy but talented 2006 TeleTech Idol.

TeleTech Idol is an annual singing competition among employees at the various TeleTech sites. It was the first year that the employees from the provincial sites were asked to join—the first time, too, that the overall winner came from the provincial centers.



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For all your property requirements, please contact:

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HGC's 1st Philippine Housing Finance Forum held today

IN A BID TO ROUSE AND SUSTAIN interest in housing finance, the Home Guaranty Corp (HGC) is spearheading today the First Philippine Housing Finance Forum at the Manila Peninsula Hotel. The Forum is intended to be a venue for education and exchange of information about issues pertaining to housing finance as well as latest trends in the country and the neighboring Asian countries. An analysis of the financial environment as it affects business prospects in the real estate industry as well as innovations and strategies on acquired asset disposition shall also be discussed.

The Forum is the brainchild of the president of HGC Gonzalo Benjamin A. Bongolan, who is noted for his dynamic leadership, integrity and proficiency in the field of finance. He is widely credited for turning around what was once a diving HGC into the viable agency that it is today. Bongolan believes that the event will spark off more involvement and participation especially from its private sector partners as they become more immersed in the current trends and issues in housing finance in the Philippines. "We would like to generate greater awareness and hopefully get more commitments for support through this forum", says Bongolan.

The Forum will be led by Vice President Noli L. De Castro who will discuss the government's vision on affordable housing and sustainable housing finance. "The Vice President has been a rich source of inspiration and has guided us in the conceptualization of the forum," said Bongolan.

Joining Bongolan are other prominent speakers who are also considered authorities and experts.

Xenon Bulbs refurbishes showroom

TO PROVIDE BETTER COMFORT and service to its clients, Xenon Bulbs has refurbished its showroom along Araneta Avenue, Quezon City. Designed by renowned architect Daniel Go, the Xenon showroom houses its various line of high intensity discharge bulbs and Smart Bikes for patrons to enjoy. A service bay is located adjacent to the showroom which is manned by personnel trained to meet the service requirements and installation of Xenon Bulbs. Special tools are also on hand for the upkeep and after sales service of Smart Bikes.

"I feel that it is time to give something back to our loyal customers. With this showroom, clients can enjoy the air-conditioned confines and watch their favorite movie or read a magazine in our lounge. Our product rack gives you an idea of what Xenon is right for your car or they can choose an electric bike displayed in the showroom," states Benedict Go of Hummer Philippines, exclusive distributor of Xenon Bulbs.

Xenon Bulbs technology adapts to varying conditions such as weather, road, and vehicle speed. Aside from automotive headlamp systems, other applications of xenon bulbs technology include: marine (for fast crafts and ships), stage production, industrial and military use. Unlike other imitation HiDs in the local market, Xenon Bulbs carry an after sales warranty of up to 12 months. When purchasing a set of Xenon Bulbs, look for the seal of quality and the Xenon Bulbs logo. All authentic Xenon products made by HPI carry a warranty seal inside the box.

"There are lot of lighting products currently being sold in the market, and being passed off as Xenon Bulbs. These imitation bulbs are cheaper, they wear out easily and carry no warranty. Our packaging alone reflects the quality of our products," adds Go. Xenon bulbs have evolved from being a mere safety accessory to becoming a standard safety option for both car owners and automobile manufacturers.

For inquiries, call 713-1998 or visit the Xenon showroom at 318 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City, or log on to www.xenon-bulbs.com.

China Bank depositors get new statement of accounts

CHINA BANK RECENTLY COMPLETED phase 1 of the automation of the clients' Statements of Accounts (SOA) and began mailing the new redesigned and improved SOA to Metro Manila clients.

Parallel testing of the statement automation project is currently being conducted in three branches this January. Soon, it will be rolled out to all Metro Manila branches, followed by provincial branches.

The new China Bank SOA is a big improvement from its predecessor. Additional information has been included for easy reference, and with the automation, the SOAs can be sent within one week from cut-off date.

"The equipment we leased can process up to 72 transactions per minute which includes printing, inserting and folding the SOA in individual envelopes. What used to be done manually for weeks can now be finished in a few days," said business process manager and project leader Melanie K. Ngo-Rivera.

China Bank leased from technology leader Fuji Xerox state-of-the-art machines like Fuji Xerox Docuprint DP 90 and Pitney Bowes DI950 FastPac Inserting System, for the printing of China Bank's SOAs. "The automation is not only time and cost effective, it eliminates the need for branch personnel to manually process the bank statements so they can now focus more on the business," said Rivera.

Phase 2 of the project is expected to be completed within the next four months. By June or July, SOAs sent to all clients will already include check images.

Insular Life welcomes 2 new executives

INSULAR LIFE CHAIR AND CEO Vicente R. Aylión recently announced the appointment of two executives to key positions within the company: Amelita Fernandez-Tamayo, as vice president and head of the marketing and agency support division (MASD); and Cresciente M. Alday Jr as vice president and head of the general agencies and high-end sales division (GA-HESD).

As head of MASD, Tamayo's division is responsible for developing, integrating, and initiating sales and marketing strategies in coordination with the company's sales operations group's line managers. Under the division are three separate units which handle brand marketing, customer value management, and agency relations. Tamayo is a BS Management and Industrial Engineering graduate of the Mapua Insitute of Technology, and is a candidate for the Fellow, Life Management Institute (FLMI) designation. She has more than 12 years of extensive experience in brand management, market research, product development, marketing services, and institutional marketing.

Prior to joining Insular Life, she was head of a pre-need company's marketing division. Meanwhile, as head of GA-HESD, Alday's division is responsible for the expansion of operations of the company's GAs, as well as implementation of strategies and programs that will ensure manpower recruitment and development matched with the identified needs of special markets. Alday is a BS Business Management graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University. He has completed the requirements to earn the FLMI designation. He has more than 14 years of extensive experience in agency development, worksite marketing, and sales promotions in the life insurance industry. Prior to joining Insular Life, Alday was the agency director for Luzon of another life insurance company.

Creative Bakers wants women to enjoy bread

HOW GOOD CAN IT GET WHEN YOU CAN have both the nutritional benefits of your favorite soy milk and dairy products in your ordinary bread? Yes, bread is not just another carb-based product as Walter entices you to experience the great taste of the new Wheat n' Soy Bread for Women.

Made from the choicest ingredients which are beneficial for women's health—soy, calcium, aquamin, whole grains and fiber. You can now enjoy all the necessary nutrients without compromising the good taste of bread just for your diet.

Soy protein, aside from decreasing the instances of osteoporosis and cardiovascular diseases and cholesterol level, has been proven to do wonders on reducing menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, trouble sleeping, lack of energy, and headaches.

You can now enjoy the same calcium amount which you get from your favorite dairy products. Calcium is essential for formation of strong bones and prevention of osteoporosis. Wheat n' Soy Bread for Women is enriched with every woman's recommended dietary need of calcium.

Another vital nutrient Wheat n' Soy Bread for Women is made of is aquamin, which contains 72 body essential nutrients, including calcium, magnesium, boron, and zinc.

Wheat n' Soy Bread for Women is also packed with whole grain and fibers which are known to reduce the risk of heart diseases, diabetes and prevent constipation.

Another add-on nutrient is folate which is popularly known to be necessary for pregnant women in cell generation, formation of genetic material, and growth.

Manufactured by Creative Bakers, enjoy more than just a bite of Wheat n' Soy Bread for Women, available in all leading grocery stores nationwide.

TeleTech Inaugurates Bacolod City BPO Center

Edmar Enriquez: rising up to the challenge

EDMAR ENRIQUEZ IS ONE OF TeleTech Bacolod CMC's pioneer employees. He was taken in as a customer service representative—part of the first wave of TeleTech employees hired for the site's start-up operations in June 2006.

Notwithstanding the fact that he did not have any prior call center experience, Edmar quickly learned the ropes and adjusted to the requirements of the job. After a month and a half of hard work and dedication, he was promoted to team leader (TL) position.

"I think it was a case of simply being at the right place and at the right time. Likewise, TeleTech's continued expansion opened opportunities for employees to move up and occupy key positions," says Edmar.

Edmar feels privileged to have joined a multi-national company without having to leave his birthplace, Bacolod. Edmar says "Before TeleTech came to Bacolod City, there were very few job opportunities for young graduates like me."

"I hope for the company's continued success in Bacolod and I also wish that more multi-national companies will invest in Bacolod following TeleTech's footsteps," adds Edmar.

The usual challenges that go with supervising call center agents are among the things Edmar looks for in a fulfilling job. "There really is no room for slacking or else you will be left behind. A lot of dedication and perseverance, plus a conscious effort to enjoy what you do, comprise a surefire formula for succeeding as a call center professional," Edmar says.

As a team leader, Edmar reaches out and listens to the ideas and feedback from his team members. This approach has allowed him to keep his team highly motivated. To him, the 'golden rule' remains an effective people management tenet as he treats his team the way he himself wants to be treated.

Bongay Camon: glad to be back home

MA. THERESA CAMON, OR "Bongay" to her fellow TeleTech employees, worked in a call center in Manila for two years before coming home to Bacolod.

It was a tough choice for Bongay to go to Manila to earn a living because it meant leaving behind her three kids. At the time, job opportunities in Bacolod were very limited.

While in Manila, she would always feel lonely because she missed her kids and her hometown, especially during the holidays. Throughout her two-year stint in the metropolis, she was able go home to Bacolod only three times.

When Bongay heard from a friend who works for TeleTech in Manila that TeleTech was opening a Customer Management Center in Bacolod she wasted no time in filing her application.

And the rest, as they say, is history. She is now part of TeleTech Bacolod as a team leader.

When asked to compare her call center work in Manila and in Bacolod, Bongay says, "the culture is basically the same but relationships here in the province are more personal. In Manila, after work we'd all go our separate ways."

"I am grateful to TeleTech for bringing me home and for providing me and my fellow Bacolodnons job opportunities. It is, indeed a big boost to the local economy. There are still a lot of Bacolodnons working in Manila and I encourage them to come home, be with their families and seize the various career opportunities at TeleTech," says Bongay.

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HOME DEVELOPMENT MUTUAL FUND

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Supply and Delivery of Various IT Equipment and Peripherals

The **Pag-IBIG FUND**, through its **Bids and Awards Committee for Information Technology Resources (BAC-ITR)** intends to apply the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Supply and Delivery of the following IT Equipment and Peripherals. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

Category	Qty./Unit	Item Description	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Cost of Bid Documents
I		Various Network Items	P 28,479,734.80	P 14,000.00
II	1,420 pcs.	DLT Tape IV	P 2,272,000.00	P 2,500.00
III.a	16 units	Desktop Computers	P 904,000.00	P 1,500.00
III.b	12 units	Laptop Computers	P 960,000.00	

The **Pag-IBIG FUND** now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the abovementioned items. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the Pag-IBIG FUND and inspect the Bidding Documents at the Procurement Division, General Services Department, Room 704, The Atrium of Makati, Makati Avenue, Makati City starting February 2, 2007 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders at the Procurement Division, General Services Department, Pag-IBIG FUND, The Atrium of Makati, Makati Avenue, Makati City and upon payment of the non-refundable fee of the specified cost of Bid Documents. The method of payment will be made available only to prospective bidders upon payment of the required fee to the Cash Division, Treasury Department, Pag-IBIG FUND Corporate Headquarters. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidders or his authorized representative.

The **Pag-IBIG FUND** will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties at The Taduran Hall, Room 602, The Atrium of Makati, Makati Avenue, Makati City on the following schedule:

Category	Qty./Unit	Item Description	Pre-Bid Conference	Bid Opening
I		Various Network Items	Feb. 9, 2007 2:00 p.m.	Feb. 21, 2007 2:00 p.m.
II	1,420 pcs.	DLT Tape IV	Feb. 12, 2007 9:00 a.m.	Feb. 23, 2007 9:00 a.m.
III.a	16 units	Desktop Computers	Feb. 12, 2007 2:00 p.m.	Feb. 23, 2007 2:00 p.m.
III.b	12 units	Laptop Computers		

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to Room 704, Procurement Division, General Services Department, Pag-IBIG FUND, The Atrium of Makati, Makati Avenue, Makati City on or before the Opening of Bids. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in an amount equivalent to a percentage of the ABC to bid in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check and two and a half percent (2 ½%) of the ABC in the form of GSIS surety bond. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be held at The Taduran Hall, Room 602, The Atrium of Makati, Makati Avenue, Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives.

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last five (5) years with an amount of at least 50% of the ABC of the prosposed project for bidding.

The **Pag-IBIG FUND** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

For further inquiries and/or information, please call Messrs. Wilfrido Nacito S. Reyes and Jose Maria M. Diaz at 8114262, 8945815 or visit our Corporate Website at http://www.pagibigfund.gov.ph or e-mail us at gsd@pagibigfund.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **ATTY. OBERLIN L. PASTORES**
Chair, BAC ITR

(PDI--Feb. 2, 2007)

City Government of Zamboanga
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
City Hall, Zamboanga City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The CITY GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBOANGA invites PhilGEPS registered suppliers to apply for the following items.

Name of Projects	Approved Budget for the Contract	Date/Time		Price of Bid Documents (non-refundable)
		Pre-Bid Conference	Deadline/ Opening of Bids	
1. Other Property Plants and Equipment (Steam Boiler, Hog Restrainer et al.)	P 3,650,000.00	February 09, 2007	February 20, 2007, 10:00 AM	1,200.00

The Bid documents shall be available at the City Mayor's Office, Procurement, Acquisition and Awards Division, City Hall, Zamboanga City starting **February 01 to 20, 2007** upon payment of non-refundable fee indicated above.

The Pre-Bid conference shall be held at **City Engineer's Office, Conference Hall, City Hall, Zamboanga City.**

The Bidder shall drop and enclose the original of the Technical Proposal in one sealed envelope; whereas, the original of the Financial Proposal shall be enclosed in another sealed envelope. Both envelopes shall then be placed in another single envelope. In the bid box located at the abovementioned address.

For more information, please call the Procurement, Acquisition and Awards Division at Telephone No. (062) 992-7763.

The **CITY GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBOANGA** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) **DR. MARIO D. ARRIOLA**
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Feb. 2, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITION

In Compliance with RA 7041

Planning and Budget Division

Planning Assistant - SG 8
Item No. OMBA-PLA-1-1998

Education: Completion of two years studies in college; **Experience:** 1 year of relevant experience; **Training:** 4 hours of relevant training; **Eligibility:** Career Service Subprofessional/First Level Eligibility

Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resources Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for;
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1"x1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
5) * Transcript of Records;
6) * Certificate of Seminars/Training attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable);
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two periods (for current government employees only);
9) * Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

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Email: may.almudin@henrybutcher.com

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INTERESTED PARTY MAY CALL:
896-1381 / 87 LOC. 206

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

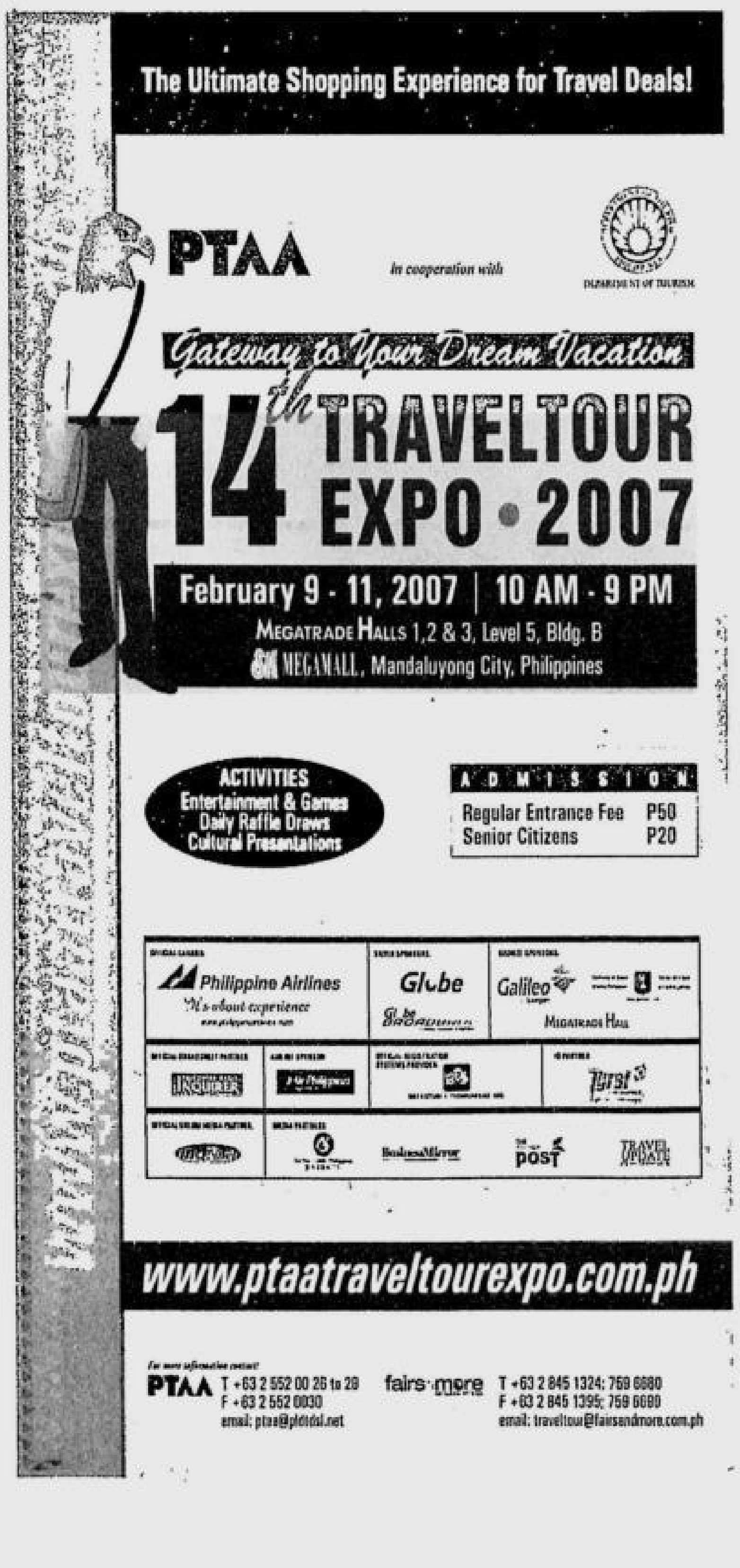
GINA JANO y DE JUAN
CRIMINAL CASE NO. 134232

This is to inform the public that **GINA JANO y DE JUAN** whose picture appears above has been issued a warrant of arrest by the Regional Trial Court, Branch 160, Pasig City for the crime of **QUALIFIED THEFT**. Her last known addresses are no. 8207-7 Sgt. Yabut St., Guadalupe, Makati City and Mianay Sigma, Capiz.

Please direct any information leading to her arrest or whereabouts to:

Conchita Hojilla
Tel. No. 724-6530

(PDI – February 2, 2007)



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT BUREAU
DENR Compound, Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City 1116
Telephone Nos.: 925-47-93 to 97
Email: emb@emb.gov.ph
visit us at http://www.emb.gov.ph

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

on the ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) for the Proposed Rehabilitation and Modification (from Ferrochrome to Ferronickel) of PGMC's Existing Smelter Plant Project

Notice is hereby given to all parties who wish to give their opinion regarding the proposed **Rehabilitation and Modification (from Ferrochrome to Ferronickel) of PGMC's Existing Smelter Plant Project** to attend a Public Hearing scheduled on February 24, 2007 @ 10:00 AM at Manticao Covered Court, Poblacion, Manticao, Misamis Oriental.

This Public Hearing will be conducted concerning the review of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of the aforementioned Project by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

All interested parties who wish to attend or participate in this Public Hearing should first register in person or by mail with the **EMB** at **DENR Compound, Visayas Avenue, Diliman Quezon City** c/o Ms. Esperanza A. Sajul, OIC-Chief, Environmental Impact Assessment and Management Division or with the Environmental Management Bureau Region X (Cagayan de Oro City) at telephone number (088) 726 6243, prior to the said hearing.

Individual and/or organizations may give their opinion in a concise position paper submitted to the EMB/EMB Region X on or before February 24, 2007.

For more details, please contact the EIA Division of EMB through Mr. Ernesto B. Villalva at telephone nos. (02) 920-2240 to 41 or emil at emb@emb.gov.ph.

(PDI – January 26 & February 2, 2007)

Animal Therapy is given to patients in The One Algon Place Foundation Inc, as Mr. Rudin Gonzales III showcases some of his dogs. TOAPFI Kennel has the following dogs available for stud service / breeding: Golden Retriever, Labrador Retriever, Pug, English Bulldog, American Bulldog, Doberman, Pitbull, Daschund and etc. For inquiries please contact Mr. Rudin G. Gonzales III at (0917) 855-9009 or e-mail at jun_gonzales22@hotmail.com.

OBITUARIES

First Death Anniversary

JOSE L. POE JR.

10 December 1931 – 02 February 2006

The family requests relatives and friends
to offer prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

Death Notices

ANGEL BAYANIN ORTEGA
March 23 1925 - January 28, 2007

Interment tomorrow, February 3, 2007 at the Immaculate Concepcion Memorial Park after the 1 p.m. Mass at Immaculate Concepcion Parish, Bauan, Batangas.

—oOo—

LYDIA REYES SAN PEDRO
Peacefully joined the Lord on January 26, 2007.

Interment will be on Sunday, February 4, 2007 at Libingang Katoliko, Bocaue, Bulacan.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord." — 2 Corinthians 5:8

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s.

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
J AND G ENTERTAINMENT 56 Hemady, Mariana, Quezon City	Shigeyuki Oka	Entertainment Consultant and Promoter
UNO Y DOS FOODS CORPORATION Ortigas Auto Depot, Ortigas Home Depot, Ugong, Pasig City	Kyung Hee Lee	Operations and Marketing Manager
UNO Y DOS FOODS CORPORATION Ortigas Auto Depot, Ortigas Home Depot, Ugong, Pasig City	Dae Gun Ha	Brand Development Manager and Food Quality Control Manager
HINDUJA TMT, LTD. HTMT Cyberpark, 86 E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave., Brgy. Ugong Norte, Quezon City	Sriram Marpuri	Special Projects Head
LARSEN & TOUBRO INFOTECH LIMITED 3/F, Valero Tower, 122 Valero St., Bel-Air Village, Makati City	Mandar Vinaykumar Pandharkar	Functional Analyst
PHILIPPINE GAMING MANAGEMENT CORPORATION 29/F, Rufino Pacific Tower, 6784 Ayala Ave. cor. Rufino St., Legaspi Village, Makati City	Swee Pin Seow	Chief Operating Officer
UNIMEX, INC. 1104 Shaw Towers, Shaw Blvd., cor. St. Francis St., Mandaluyong City	Chul Ho Shin	President
STRYKER MEDICAL & SURGICAL (PHILIPPINES) INC. R-4D/F, APMC Bldg., Amorsolo St., San Lorenzo Village, Makati City	Jeong Ouk Kim	Director
LARSEN & TOUBRO INFOTECH LIMITED 4/F, Valero Tower, 122 Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Dhiraj Dattatray Walgude	Functional Analyst
POWEREDGE SOLUTIONS PHILS., INC. 285-A Haig St., Mandaluyong City	Joris George Jacobus Johannes Spanhoff	Managing Director
SCUBA WORLD, INC. 1181 Pablo Ocampo St., Makati City	Marius Alexander Zeier	Instructor / Dive Master
BOEHRINGER INGELHEIM (PHILIPPINES) INC. 23/F, Citibank Tower, Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Andrea Karoline Godert	Managing Director / President
E-WORLD TRAVEL & TOURS PHIL. CORP. Unit 1005, Pearl of the Orient Tower, 1240 Roxas Blvd., Ermita, Manila	Sung Youl Kim	Marketing Consultant
PHILIPPINE SKY TOP TRAVEL & TOURS CORP. S-303 Ermita Center Bldg., 1350 Roxas Blvd., Ermita, Manila	Sun Ho Lee	Tour Manager
E-WORLD TRAVEL & TOURS PHIL. CORP. Unit 1005, Pearl of the Orient Tower, 1240 Roxas Blvd., Ermita, Manila	Kyungcheol Lee	Vice President
OSG SHIP MANAGEMENT MANILA, INC. Suite 1208 Ermita Center Bldg., 1350 Roxas Blvd., Ermita, Manila	Eduard Tkalcic	OSG Owner Representative
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Boon Keng Cheng	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Yulianto	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Yiyuan Wen	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Tan Busman	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Mery	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Julianti	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Hong Kim Lim	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Yan Li	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Alvin Gan	IT Support Staff
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CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Kim Huat Tan	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Chum Liang Lau	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Ee Swee Gwee	IT Support Staff
ejobz.net Inc (SpecOps Laboratories) Unit 24-1 Summit One Tower, 530 Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City	Frederick James Lewis	President / CEO
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Lian Chyou Beh	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Win Hui Chang	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Liang Wang	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Sin Fu Tjong	IT Support Staff
CASPO INCORPORATED 20/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Meng Sen Ang	IT Support Staff

If you have any information / objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI – February 2, 2007)

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Commission on Audit Page B4

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office No. V
Pier Site, Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Food Authority (NFA) in Region V, through its Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC) invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the following projects:

	Project	Location	Brief Description	Approved Budget (Php)	Calendar days for Completion
Lot 1	Repair of Regional Office Bldg.	Pier Site, Legazpi City	Re-roofing/repair/ Improvement of 1st flr, 2nd flr & 3rd flr	4,499,628.50	120
Lot 2	Site development of NFA-Legazpi City compound and Rehabilitation of Motorpool/TSD Office	- do -	– Provision of new retaining wall & repair of bldg foundation & scoured compound – Re-roofing/ restoration/improvement	3,895,561.21	120
Lot 3	Restoration/construction of 50,000 cavans cap. whse.	NFA Compound, Tabaco City	Dismantling of existing wooden abacorp whse and const of whse made of concrete wall & floor slab & steel trusses w/ G.I. roofings	8,999,950.75	180

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB license with a minimum Small B category and duly registered with the Government Electronic Procurement System (GEPS) of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). The prospective bidder must submit a largest single contract, the value of which adjusted to current prices using the wholesale consumer price index, and completed within the period of five (5) years, similar to the contract to be bid and must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC). Also, the prospective bidder must have key personnel and equipment available for the implementation of the contract. The RBAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the eligibility check/screening as well as the preliminary examination of bids. The RBAC will conduct post-qualification of the Lowest Calculated Bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A).

The schedule of RBAC activities are as follows:

	ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1.	Receipt from prospective bidders of Letter of Intent (LOI) & including application for eligibility & to bid	January 29, 2007 to February 05, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
2.	Issuance of eligibility forms	January 29, 2007 February 05, 2007	8:00 a.m.– 5:00 p.m.
3.	Deadline for submission of Eligibility Requirements	February 05, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
4.	Notice of results of Eligibility Check	February 06, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
5.	Issuance of Bid Documents	February 07, 2007 to February 12, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
6.	Pre-bid Conference	February 9, 2007	10:00 a.m.
7.	Submission of Bid Documents	February 22, 2007	until 9:30 a.m.
8.	Opening of Bids	February 22, 2007	10:00 a.m.

Eligibility forms/requirements may be secured and submitted to the RBAC Secretariat upon submission of Letter of Intent (LOI) and payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable amount of Php 500.00 to the NFA Cashier.

Bidding documents will be issued to eligible bidders only upon payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable amount of Php 5,000.00 per lot to the NFA Cashier.

The venue for the pre-bidding conference, submission and opening of bids shall be at the Conference Room, 2nd Floor, NFA-Regional Office V, Pier Site, Legazpi City.

Any eligible bidder can bid for one, a combination or all of the lots.

Other inquiries may be addressed to the RBAC Secretariat with tel. # (052) 480-7933 / 480-7015 / 480-7085 / 820-0018 and Fax # (052) 480-7900.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT ONLY SUCH BIDS, OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) **JOSE B. GUEVARA**
RBAC Chairman

(PDI – January 27 & February 2, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Cebu
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE - INFRASTRUCTURE
Cebu Capitol, Cebu City
Tel. No. 255-6123; Fax No. 253-3981

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Province of Cebu, through its Bids and Awards Committee-Infrastructure (BAC-INFRA), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder contracts:

A. Road Asphalting:

General Information
Title Road Improvement Projects 2007
Scope Items of work include, but not limited to, asphalting, line ditching, cross drainage & slope protection

Particulars:

Package (Contract ID)	ABC (PhP)	Location & Road Sections	Plans and Bid Documents (PhP)
Package 1 PC-RA-07.01	55,854,502.39	**1st District, Mainland Cebu** 1. Campo 7 - Hayunan Rd., Minglanilla 2. Balirong - Alpaco Rd., Naga 3. Sangi - Balungag Rd., San Fernando 4. Ocaña - Napo - Pueslo - Guadalupe Rd., Carcar 5. Perrelos - Can-asujan Rd., Carcar 6. Valencia - Buenavista Rd., Carcar	20,000.00
Package 2 PC-RA-07.02	146,959,631.56	**2nd District, Mainland Cebu** 1. Usmad - Cansuje Rd., Argao 2. Cambanua - Jomgao - Panadtaran Rd., Argao 3. Cawayan - Malones Rd., Dalaguete 4. Guiwang - Cabalongan Rd., Alcoy 5. Alcoy - Nug-as Rd., Alcoy 6. Boljo-on - Dalayday - Sn. Antonio Rd., Boljo-on 7. Samboan - Cañang Rd., Samboan 8. Caceres Rd., Oslob 9. Luka - Tumalog - Canyang Rd., Oslob 10. Poblacion - Inambakan Falls Road, Ginatilan 11. Poblacion Alegria - Lepanto Rd., Alegria 12. Banhigan - Lambog Rd., Badian 13. Badian Cemetery Rd., Badian 14. Leon Ejercito Street, Badian 15. Dagatan Road, Badian 16. Sta. Cruz - Liki/Baha-baha Road, Ronda 17. Ylaya - Kantangkas - Pawa Rd., Dumanjug 18. Cogon - Lawa-an Rd., Dumanjug	50,000.00
Package 3 PC-RA-07.03	75,869,472.75	**3rd District, Mainland Cebu** 1. Japitan - Candugay - Gioctog Rd., Barili 2. Cabcaban - Cagay - Paril Rd., Barili 3. Pob. Gunting - Balao Section, Barili 4. Cagay - Kalubihan Rd., Barili 5. Esperanza - Tampa-an Rd., Aloguinsan 6. Asturias - Agtugop Rd., Asturias 7. Mangga - Carmelo Rd., Tuburan 8. Tuburan Beach Rd., Tuburan	20,000.00
Package 4 PC-RA-07.04	93,441,176.31	**4th District, Mainland Cebu** 1. Maño - Cayam Rd., San Remegio 2. Poblacion Tominjao - Maya Rd., Daanbantayan 3. Bogo - Liberta - Odlot Rd., Bogo 4. Car-anan - Ilihan Section, Tabogon 5. Poblacion, Tabogon 6. Dayhagon - Lamintak - Luy-a - Pob. Rd., Medellin 7. Curva - Tindog Provincial Road, Medellin	20,000.00
Package 5 PC-RA-07.05	25,461,316.93	**5th & 6th Districts, Mainland Cebu** 1. Sogod - Pansoy Rd., Sogod 2. Cantumog - Natimao-an Rd., Carmen 3. Baingasaw Provincial Road, Lilo-an	10,000.00
Package 6 PC-RA-07.06	38,301,795.70	**Bantayan Island** 1. Kankaibe - Atop-atop Prov'l. Rd., Bantayan 2. Bunakan Road, Madridejos	10,000.00
Package 7 PC-RA-07.07	59,700,500.91	**Camotes Island** 1. Sn. Francisco - Sta. Cruz-Cabungaan Rd., San Francisco 2. Sn. Francisco - Puertobello Rd., Sn. Francisco 3. Sn. Francisco - Santiago Rd., Sn. Francisco 4. Western Pob. - Adela Daan Paz Rd., Poro 5. Poro Altavista Rd., Poro	20,000.00

B. Construction of Bridges

General Information
Title :2007 CEBU PROVINCE PRIORITY BRIDGE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS
Scope :Reconstruction of Bridges

Package (Contract ID)	ABC (PhP)	Location & Road Sections	Plans and Bid Documents (PhP)
Package 1 PC-BR-07.01	6,880,167.00	**1st District, Mainland Cebu** 1. Baran Bridge I, Baran, Naga 2. Baran Bridge II, Baran, Naga 3. Baraca Bridge, Carcar 4. Napo Bridge, Carcar	4,000.00
Package 2 PC-BR-07.02	8,886,062.00	**2nd & 3rd District, Mainland Cebu** 1. Lepanto Bridge, Poblacion, Alegria 2. Ebo Bridge, Balamban	4,000.00
Package 3 PC-BR-07.03	17,463,059.00	**4th District, Mainland Cebu** 1. Purgason Bridge, Daanbantayan 2. Odlot Bridge I, Bogo 3. Odlot Bridge II, Bogo 4. Lapaz Banban Bridge, Bogo 5. Sagay Bridge II, Borbon 6. Dakit Bridge, Borgon	5,000.00
Package 4 PC-BR-07.03	17,598,703.00	**5th District, Mainalnd Cebu** 1. Ipil Bridge, Carmen 2. Cantumog - Natimao-an Bridge, Carmen 3. Balus Bridge, Tudela, Camotes Island 4. McArthur Bridge I, Tudela, Camotes Island 5. McArthur Bridge II, Tudela, Camotes Island 6. Saoran Bridge, Tudela Camotes Island 7. Adela Bridge, Poro, Camotes Island 8. San Jose Bridge I, Poro, Camotes Island 9. San Jose Bridge II, Poro, Camotes Island	5,000.00

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the ABC per package, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC-INFRA will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening and in the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC-INFRA will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Submission of Eligibility Documents/Statements and Screening, Bid and Performance Securities, Pre-Bidding Conferences, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract, shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A).

The schedule of activities is as follows:

BAC-INFRA Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	February 2-8, 2007
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	February 2-8, 2007
3. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	February 8, 2007
4. Notice of Eligibility Check Results	February 9, 2007
5. Issuance of Plans and Bid Documents	February 12, 2007
6. Pre-bid Conference	February 15, 2007
7. Receipt and Opening of Bids	February 21, 2007

The BAC-INFRA Secretariat will issue to prospective bidder's Eligibility Forms at the Provincial Engineer's Office, Capitol Compound, Cebu City, upon their submission of a Letter of Intent stating and specifying therein which projects they intend to undertake, and payment of non-refundable amount of Fifty Pesos (P50.00) for each project to the Cash Division. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to, and may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check from, the aforementioned address. For further inquiries, one may call the Secretariat at (032) 255-6123.

The Secretariat will issue Bidding Documents including Plans and Specifications only to bidders declared by the BAC-INFRA who are found to be eligible to bid, upon payment to the Cash Division a non-refundable amount as above-stated.

The Province of Cebu assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids, and reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding or not to award the contract.

(Sgd.) **ADOLFO V. QUIROGA**
Chairman

(PDI--Feb. 2, 4 & 6, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
NORTHERN ILOILO POLYTECHNIC STATE COLLEGE
Main Campus, Estancia, Iloilo
Tel. No.: (033) 3970314 Fax No.: (033) 3970315
E-mail Address: nipsc_main@yahoo.com

NOTICE OF SEARCH AND CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The Board of Trustees of the Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College formally and publicly announces that the Search for Presidency of the **NORTHERN ILOILO POLYTECHNIC STATE COLLEGE** is now open. Interested applicants and/or nominees are invited to send their formal applications to the Search Committee chaired by Commissioner Saturnino M. Ocampo, Jr.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS :

- Must be a Natural born Filipino citizen;
- A holder of an earned doctorate degree in any academic field relevant to the mission and mandate of the College;
- Below 60 years old at the time of application;
- Must have a proven track record as administrator whether in private or public organization for at least five (5) years; and
- Morally upright and has no record of criminal, civil and/or administrative conviction.

Formal application addressed to the Search Committee should be accompanied with:

- Detailed Curriculum Vitae and authenticated/certified supporting documents;
- The applicant's proposed Vision and Thrust for the College within a four-year period;
- Result of the Neuro-Psychiatric Examination accomplished by a competent physician of a government accredited Test Center;
- Medical Certificate of Physical Fitness issued by a government physician;
- Under Oath CSC Form 212; and
- Certificate of no pending cases.

Interested applicants and/or those nominated for the position are requested to submit six (6) sets of their formal application and certified supporting documents on or before March 06, 2007 to:

MR. MARLON N. FABRICANTE
Executive Assistant IV
Office of Commmissioner S. M. OCAMPO, JR. OR
CHED, 5/f, DAP Bldg., San Miguel Ave.,
Ortigas Center, Pasig City
Tel. No. (02) 636-1690
Telefax No. (02) 636-1693

MS. JULIETA S. RAVENA
Board Secretary
Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College
Main Campus, Estancia, Iloilo
Tel. No. (033) 397-0314
Telefax No. (033) 397-0315

'Otop' campaign focusing on ARMM

Seaweed production will be among the priorities

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF Muslim Mindanao, considered the country's food basket, is the next focus of the government's 'One Town, One Product' (Otop) campaign, which has helped develop 3,000 new micro, small and medium enterprises and created 100,000 new jobs since its launch in 2004.

Trade Secretary Carissa C. Evangelista said that under the program, seaweed production would likely be among ARMM's priorities.

"The growth of the area hinges upon how we can develop agricultural resources into agribusiness," said Evangelista, who heads the department's regional operations group. "We plan to transfer to ARMM the Otop program that is succeeding in many cities and municipalities in the country."

She said the program had become a strategy in creating vibrant local economies through the production of better products, creation of jobs in the countryside and raising additional revenues for the local governments.

ARMM, composed of Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Marawi, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, is seen as a seed bed of marine and agri-based businesses, with seaweed-related ventures among those that top the list.

In neighboring Region 9 alone, the seaweed industry in 2006 attracted P2.42 billion worth of investments and created 80,069 new jobs. Its products were exported to Japan, China, Spain, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Canada, generating least $13 million in sales last year.

The Otop program has resulted in total export sales of $114 million. Shipments were sent from 10 regions to markets in the US, Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, Australia and Canada.

Other products promoted through various Otop-related trade fairs, exhibits and other market matching activities posted earnings that reached P2.19 billion over the past three years.

The Department of Trade and Industry's ARMM office said it was planning to lay down preparatory works for the Otop launching in different towns in the region this month.

DA expects corn output to grow by 14% in Q1

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE COUNTRY'S CORN PRODUCTION IS seen to grow by 14 percent to 1.737 million metric tons in the first quarter of 2007 due to expansion of areas planted to the crop.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said the agriculture sector would be able to continue posting record corn harvest of at least 6 million metric tons for the whole year.

"The expected growth is mainly due to the 18 percent expansion in the area planted to corn and the 17 percent increase in the average yield per hectare," Yap said citing a Bureau of Agricultural Statistics report.

At the sidelines of yesterday's awarding of the country's outstanding farmers in Quezon City, Yap said this year's record harvest would keep the country on track to achieving self-sufficiency in corn by 2008. This goal can be achieved by producing at least 6.5 million metric tons of corn yearly, he said.

The department has to invest P7 billion in post-harvest facilities to boost the sector's performance.

"We're not targeting to be self-sufficient next year because we have to factor in weather disturbances," Yap said.

Last month, the weather bureau said an El Nino-induced drought had started affecting the eastern side of the country.

According to the department, even a mild dryspell could adversely affect crop production in rain-fed areas next year.

The country currently imports corn to augment local supply. For this year, some 258,000 tons will be imported.

Deal with Wells Fargo to boost BPI remittance business

BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS HAS teamed up with California-based Wells Fargo & Co. to boost its cash transfer service for overseas Filipino workers in the United States.

In a joint press briefing with Wells Fargo yesterday, Ayala Corp. CEO and BPI chair Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala said: "It's no secret that it's a tremendous source of strength for our country to have the overseas Filipino community contributing so much to the economy."

The United States accounts for 20-25 percent of BPI's total land-based remittance business, with the volume of transactions from the world's biggest economy growing by 16-20 percent in the last few years. The average remittance coming from the US amounts to $500 per transaction.

The tie-up between the two banks allows a US-based Filipino client to tap an account-to-account cash transfer service through Well Fargo's 3,300 branches in the US.

The available balance in the client's account with Wells Fargo of up to $3,000 per day can be transferred by the US-based bank to BPI the next business day. Each transfer is charged a fee of $5, one of the lowest in the remittance industry.

In the Philippines, cash can be withdrawn through any of BPI's more than 700 branches and 1,300 automated teller machines.

BPI president Aurelio Montinola III said the overseas Filipino community had become the country's new economic powerhouse, "creating a new middle class that cuts through geographical boundaries."

Daniel Ayala, Wells Fargo head for global remittance services, said the Philippines was among the fastest growing market for remittances and was now in good position to become a global role model on harnessing remittance flows for better economic productivity.

"There's always a concern that remittances cause dependence. I tend to disagree with that. I think that remittances foster development," Ayala said.

"Majority of the people send money for basic family needs but in most cases, there is extra money used to start up a small business or provide for somebody's education," he added.

Doris C. Dumlao

Reaching out t
Filipinos in

BPI president Aurelio Montinola, chair Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala and Daniel Ayala, head of Wells Fargo's global remittance services, exchange tokens during a press conference at the BPI building in Ayala,Makati.

INQUIRER PHOTO/ JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

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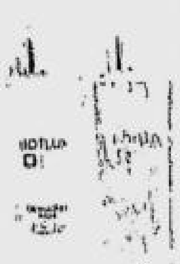
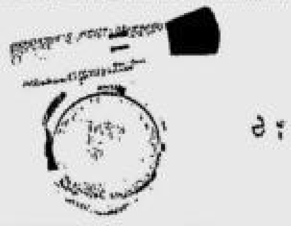
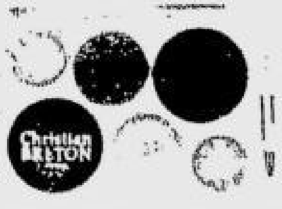
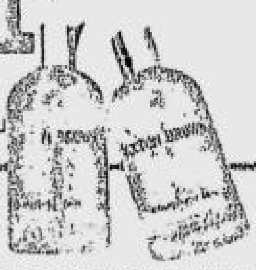

BOTLUX Cleansing Milk and **Tonique Reva Botlux Milky Fluid** (P1,700) dissolves impurities and traces of make-up, transforming dry and dull skin into a luminous complexion. **Tonique Reva**,P1,700, removes all residues.

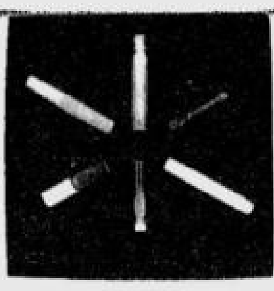
DYING to reduce the appearance of ugly drooping eye bags in a matter of weeks, in the comfort of your home? Try **Skin Doctors' Eyetuck** (P3,595), and see that great difference day by day.

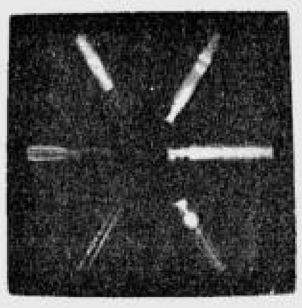

DESSANGE Shimmer Blusher (P1,800) holds the secret of pure, harmonious colors and offers a subtle natural radiance. The swivel-off mini brush enables you to easily sculpt your face.



CHRISTIAN Breton lip palettes are easy to carry around, so going from day to night won't be too hard.

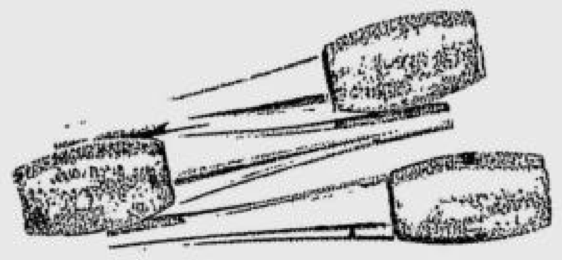

MOLTON Brown Eucalyptus and Ginger (P3,060) enlivens your whole body with the stimulating blend of pure eucalyptus oil, root finger and exfoliating sea salts. This powerful pick-me-up boosts blood circulation, gives a tingly clean feeling and reveals a clearer and brighter skintone.


CONFUSED on what scent of fragrance to give? Check out this **Marionnaud Fragrance gift set for Her** (P3749) and **for Him** (P3299) and let your loved one choose among these six amazing fragrances.



My favorite finds

Marrionaud has hidden beauty treasures


FOR GLAMOROUS and sparkling eyes, apply a fine line of **Lise Watier Glitter Eye-liner** (P1,100) directly above the eyelashes. It has long-lasting and non-smudging water-based formula.

BRITNEY Fantasy is fruity and Oriental (P3,598, 100m) while **Britney Curious** is fresh and floral (P4,000-100ml; P3,050, 50ml)

Ria Francisco-Prieto

AFTER A LONG day, there is a place called Marionnaud that you can actually lose yourself in. You can de-stress just by checking out all its beauty essentials (and then some) that girls and even guys may dream about.

At first I must confess I was pretty overwhelmed by the volume of products I could actually take home.

What I could bring home is, of course, always dependent on my buying power. And since I was there because being surrounded by beauty products actually relaxes me—and also because I want to to try and discover new products—I then began to check how much cash I had in my wallet. I simply had to spend wisely.

So while I was having a grand time checking out the numerous counters I was also making a mental checklist of what I wanted to bring home for myself.

Everything was just so pretty and the shop just felt like the National Book Store of beauty products.

So since I am a cheap customer I just told the sales assistant that I was just really browsing, which was true, come to think of it, so she wouldn't get tired following around a perspective customer who would probably just buy the cheapest thing on sale.

Seriously though, if you want to educate yourself on what's new and what's hot when it comes to beauty products, this is the store you should check out.

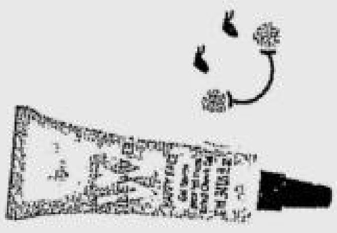
Also if you need gifts to give, Marrionaud has many wonderful and exciting products to choose from. Marionnaud is really the store for you.

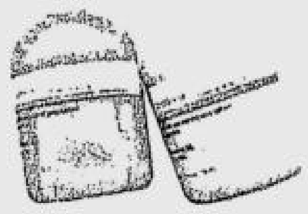
As for me I went home with blue nail polish that was just so hot that when I showed it to my friends, they borrowed it and ran to the nearest salon.

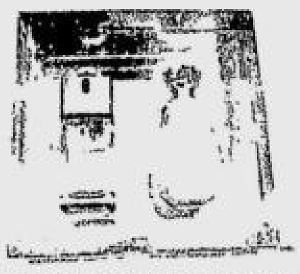
Hopefully there will still be enough for me to use when they return my Marionnaud find.

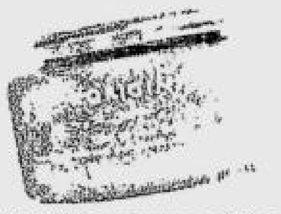
Here are some products I love and want to share with you:

HYDRATE your skin with **Ingid Millet**.


LISE WATIER- Happy Face Tinted Cheek Gel (P1,200), a translucent tinted gel, gives your skin an instant natural glow


ALLISON Colour Extend Shampoo (P1,100) and **Conditioner** (P1,100) extends the life of hair color, protects and nourishes hair structure, and adds body to hair.


DIOR2ADDICT Fragrance Gift Set for Her (P3,350)


ORIGINS introduces a calming new scent-sation to evoke memories of home, family, friends and loved ones. Relax, relieve and put your body at ease with **Calm to Your Senses** (P1,580)

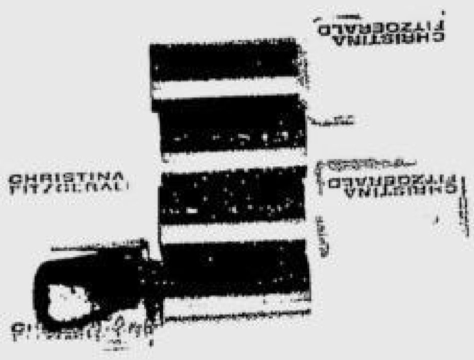
START your beauty regimen with **Valmont Magic Falls Cleansing Oil** (P3,300) and **Fresh Falls Gel Cleansers** (P3,300).

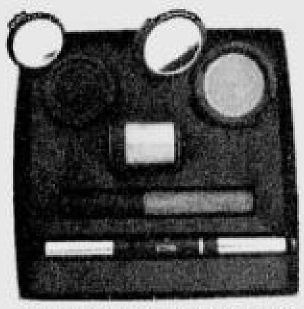
INGRID Millet Firming Serum tightens up loose skin.

WITH **Essentials** products, bath time will be like bringing the spa to your home.

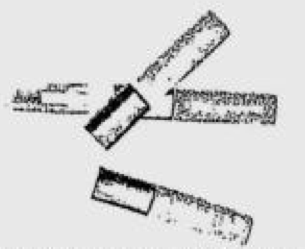
FRESH and floral in **Paul Smith Gift Set** (P3,098)

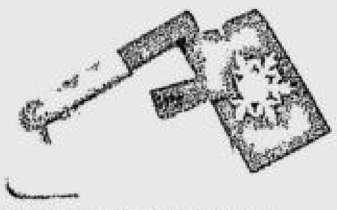
BE INSPIRED by the different glamorous and luxurious vivid colors of nail polish (P750) formulated by internationally acclaimed Australian leading manicurist **Christina Fitzgerald.** Designed to ensure fast drying, shiny and long lasting covers.

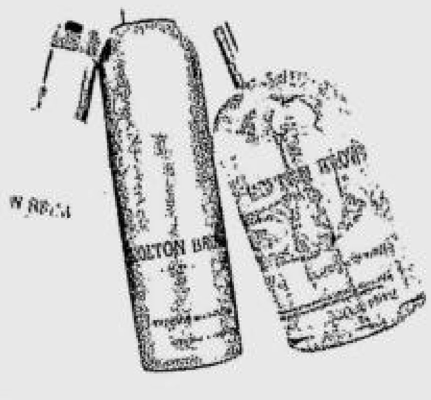



AMAZING gift sets abound.

LISE Watier Crystal Drops is deliciously flavored and enriched with vitamin E, and has a non-sticky gel texture. **Lise Watier Crystal Drops,** (P900) provides precious shimmer of crystal on the lips to make them more vivid and glamorous.


LISE Watier Long-wear Lip Gloss (P1,300) is a dual long-wear lip gloss for those ultra-brilliant lips you've always wanted.


BECCA Mesmerize Gift Set (P5,500) consists of line and illuminate pencil, eye-color powder, lip and cheek creme, loose shimmer powder and glossy lip tint, all in a white leather bag.


EXPERIENCE luxury with **Molton Brown's** expansive products—body lotion, body spray and bath. Layering would be good, so you won't even have to keep spraying on your fave scent.

Stress-free romance

To avoid a stress-filled Feb. 14, I gave my boyfriend his V-Day gift early

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

EVER SINCE I CAN REMEMBER, the crummiest time of the year, looks-wise, for most women is Valentine's Day. When V-Day falls on a week day, the stress is compounded by the horrendous traffic.

If V-Day is a regular work day, of course, the woman has to commute home to get dressed and be pretty for her loved one who will pick her up. She ends up late for the Valentine's show; eats an overpriced, cold dinner. She has melted makeup on her face, limp or frizzy hair, and a full bladder while waiting in line at the latest hip restaurant's rest room.

The huge floral bouquet her beau had delivered to her house, now thrice the usual price, has since wilted due to the sweltering heat via the long commute.

Who will not be miserable?

But for a couple, to be together is what's important!

I put things into my own hands during V-Day by giving my boyfriend his gift early.

I booked us at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Spa where they made me choose between three Valentine packages for couples. I booked in the Spa's special Balinese-inspired couple's room. The price covers a couple.

Three packages

Romantic relaxation (P4,000 for two hours)—Includes a French aroma massage, candlelit Thalassotherapy Bath, a bottle of champagne, a box of long-stem roses for the lady and a 30-minute private time for the couple.

Romantic Indulgence (P7,500 for three hours)—Additional amenities include a foot scrub with pedicure petals, a bottle of champagne, long-stem roses, a box of chocolate truffles and pralines, fruit shakes and 30-minute private time for the couple.

Romantic Luxury Package (P12,000 for five hours). I opted for this, which includes a four-course gourmet meal for two.

I booked us at 7 p.m. where we started with dinner, the menu which I planned with the spa manager beforehand: Prawn Sinigang Soup, Tuna Tartar and Beetroot with Goat Cheese Salad for appetizers, Grilled Tuna Loin for the main course and Greek Yogurt Panna Cotta for dessert.

The portions were extremely generous so I saw the logic of doing the relaxing and taking the whirlpool milk and rose petal bath afterwards. The Kobe beef was soft.

We availed ourselves of the shampoo, body scrub and champagne during our whirlpool bath and soaked till our skin was satin-smooth.

You will be left alone for two hours during the meal and bath, but I suggest you tell them beforehand if you want them back earlier so you don't wait too long and the treatment won't exceed five-and-a-half hours.

The youth facial lasted 45 minutes. Women love it, but it bored my boyfriend after 15 minutes. We both loved the massage chair which kneaded and pounded our back, shoulders, hips and legs while the therapists assigned to us gave us a foot scrub with mint mask and pedicure.

Our stomach was fully settled by then so we had our one-hour French aromassage. The girls sorted out all our sore spots and massaged our stressed stiff limbs. One of us was snoring lightly even before the massage ended a little past midnight.

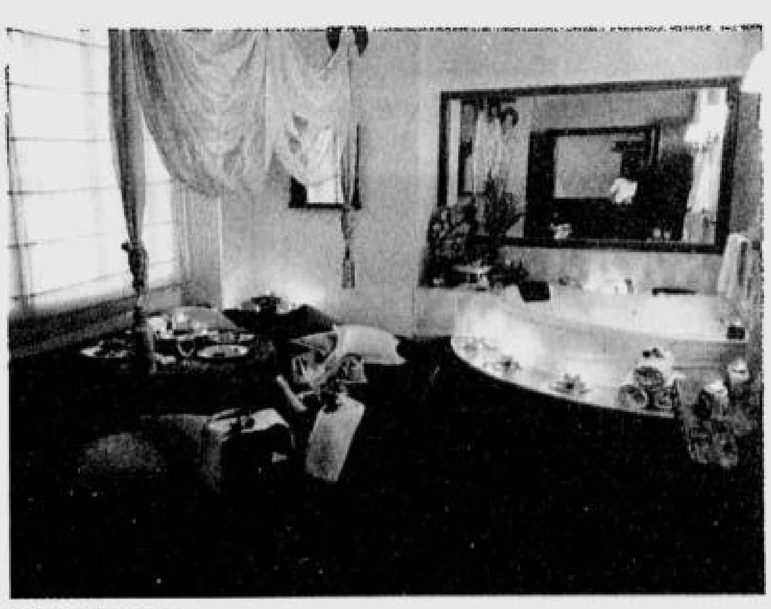
His Valentine share

My boyfriend anticipated the danger of driving home drowsy from a treatment past midnight so at 3 p.m. he booked us a room at the executive floor. Our room had a great view from the balcony of the royal-blue lagoon-shaped pool with cascading landscape and the wide sprawling sea with seagulls flying in groups.

The decor is described as minimalist (mostly white and spacious), modern (streamlined furniture with sleek metal) and unmistakably Filipino as shown by such touches as the capiz-shell details on the lamp and the coconut inlaid headboard, wardrobe and doors.

My top raves would be for the:

- Sofitel MyBed, which guarantees restful sleep with its firm supportive mattress, feather down duvet and pillows plus the high-thread count sheets.
- Roomy elegant marble and glass bathroom with its rain shower and sexy glass wall with blinds you could keep down or raise up so the person from the bed outside can view you while in the shower.
- The Spiral breakfast buffet, which comes free with the room, has hundreds of succulent food choices. It makes sticking to low-carb diets a breeze. I actually lost weight that week end while eating lots of tasty food.


SUITE Romance

MONS Romulo T. and Sander Tantoco

DR. Philip Buñag and Crystalle Henares

ASIAN Spirit's Noel Oñate and wife Marianne O.

INTERNATIONALLY renowned musical director of Il Divo Gary Wallacer and pal, architect Anton Mendoza

DR. RANDY Francisco and Irene Martel Francisco

RICARDO Po and stylish Tricia Panlilio

Fun at the Fashion Lab and Doc Belo tribute

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** using **Kodak** EasyShare system

COSMO MANILLE'S TRENDY SET GOT together and held a fashion workshop, *palanggas*.

Dubbed as "The Fashion Lab at The Ramp," the happening was held at The Ramp at Crossings of Shangri-La Plaza on an easy, relaxed Saturday afternoon as Rene Barbier wine overflowed to keep the gals in high spirits, dahlings.

The early-afternoon cocktails had hip and popular trendy labels such as XSML, Animale, Purr, After Eight, United Pop, Souk and Vado.

A happening like this just had to have invitees such as fashion icons **Celine Lopez, Jenni Epperson**, and the Preview fashion team of **Anne Bella, Kissa Castañeda** and **Liz Uy** all creating their own brands of style, *palanggas*.

These fashionable gals showed how chic looks could suit a regular gal without breaking the bank. They had a great time discussing the looks that were created from the variety of exclusive brands available at The Ramp. They made everyone look forward to the next Fashion Lab.

In the end, everyone agreed that only fabulous things came out of the fashion meeting, dahlings.

Belo parties with Il Divo

Hey! It was a trio of fab happenings that had the chauffeurs doing shuttle duty in Cosmo Manille last Saturday, *palanggas*, when woman of substance and stature, Dr. **Vicki Belo**, no less, dahlings, was honored in not just one but three events.

First off, the celebrity doctor was seen at Rustan's Makati's newly opened "Heaven on the 5th," where she received an awesome award from Thermage for having "performed the most number of Thermage cases in the world for 2006," besting over 2,000 physicians from countries in the US, Europe and Asia.

Approved by the US FDA in November 2002, Thermage is the most advanced nonsurgical treatment for facial tightening and rejuvenation. It is now available in over 70 countries, *palanggas*.

Trading Rustan's Heaven for heaven of a different sort, our vivacious celebrity doctor celebrated a *tres* special private dinner at the Peninsula Manila's Old Manila restaurant.

The dinner was organized by none other than Mr. Bulgari himself, **Mario Katigbak**, on behalf of Bulgari for one of its favorite ladies.

The *tres* chic exclusive dinner for the chosen 20 seemed like a dream! Wonderful music and dazzling white floral arrangements (courtesy of southern gent **Robert Blancaflor**) greeted Doctor Belo and guests when they arrived.

And because Bulgari knows that Belo loves chocolate, it made sure that there was a delicious palette of four chocolate desserts. Bulgari also served chocolate ice cream midway through the dinner, dahlings.

In attendance at the dinner were businessman **Atom Henares** and daughter **Cristelle**; super couple **Sander** and **Mons Tantoco**; power couple Dr. **Randy** and **Irene Francisco**; **Millet** and **Robert Mananquil**; **Gary Wilson** of Thermage International; **Doron Glazer** and **Cheryl Morano** of Spectrumed; Belo Medical Group assistant medical director Dr. **Philip Bunag**; gorgeous **Otta Uy**; banker and Asian Spirit CEO **Noel Oñate**; divine-looking miss of substance **Divine Lee**; art connoisseur **Patrick Reyno**; ace photographer **Alex Van Hagen**; and **Joji Dingcong**, top corporate imaging specialist, *palanggas*.

Barely able to recover from the chocoholic affair, Dr. Vicki B. and Joji Dingcong rushed over to Nuvo, gathering place of the elite and socially enviable, for her Thermage victory party, *palanggas*.

Vicki B. was welcomed by pals from both show biz and society circuits, including Nuvo's **Louie Ysmael**, who also helped organize the party; **Carla Tengco**, *moi*, **Margie Moran**, Dr. **Hayden Kho Jr.**, Tatler editor **Anton San Diego**, **Francis Lumen** and daughter **Savannah**; **Pepper Teehankee**; and **Sigalit** and **Sinai Djemal**.

Mixing and mingling amid sparkling Swarovski crystal and Holland tulip creations (again designed by Robert Blancaflor), were some of Cosmo Manille's most beautiful faces: **Lucy Torres-Gomez**, **Derek Ramsay**, **Troy Montero**, **Anne Curtis**, **Joyce Jimenez**, **Will Devaughn**, **Mylene Dizon** and **Aubrey Miles**, plus other dazzling stars like them, dahlings.

There were free-flowing bubbly Moet et Chandon and Belvedere, while hors d'oeuvres of goat cheese, lamb and beef were passed around in addition to the fantastic gift boxes of cool butterflied cupcakes, specially done by **Buddy Trinidad** of Park Avenue Desserts, *palanggas*.

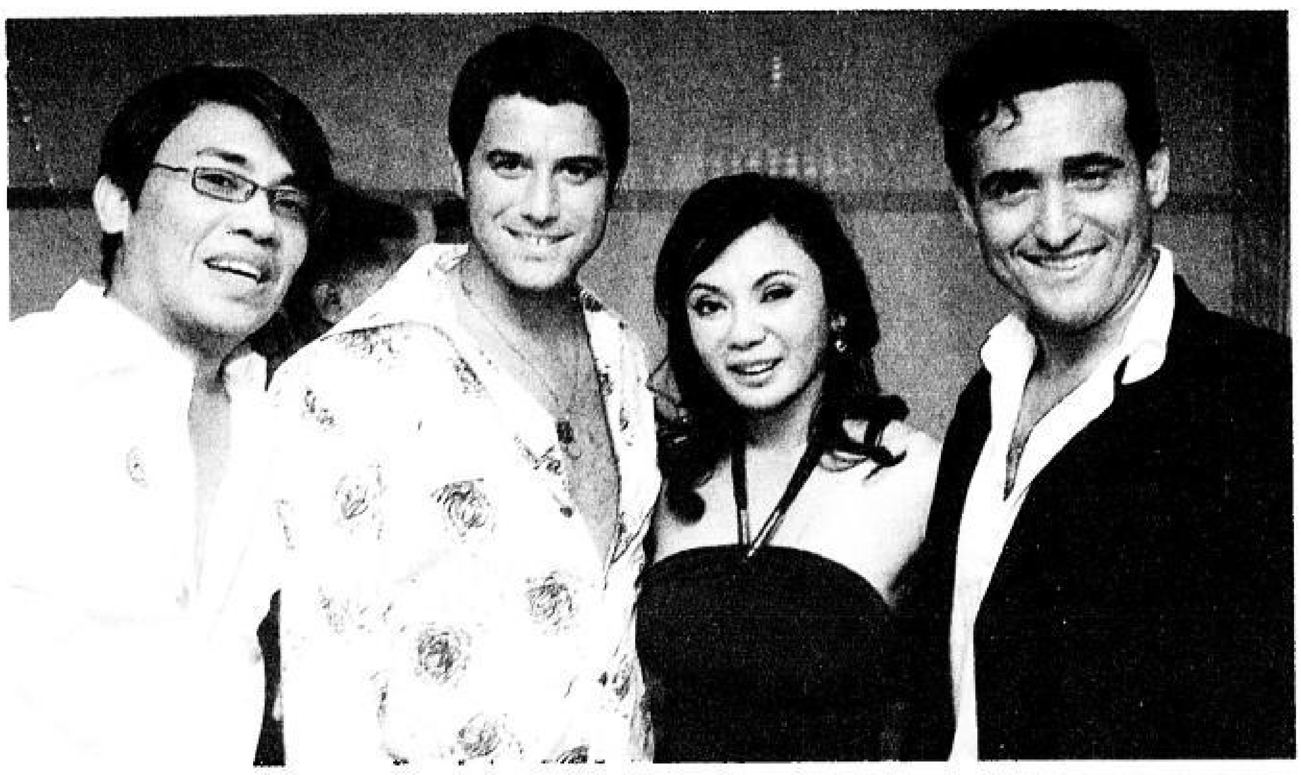
And before you could bat an eyelash, there they were those gorgeous hunks of Il Divo, who rushed to Nuvo for Vicki's private party, straight from their concert at the PICC.

The pop-opera singing sensation had met Joji D. and the fabulous hostess just the night before and had such an awesome evening together that they decided to be back that night and stayed on till past 3 a.m.!

The crowd looked on as the two most dashing members of the group, **Carlos Marin** and **Sebastien Izambard** (whom Spanish magazine Hola just named as one of the 10 sexiest men in Europe!), found themselves so dazzled by the sight of so many beautiful Filipinas they didn't know which way to turn their heads.

Ah! Only the victorious Vicki can truly claim the 6 B's, dahlings—beauty, breeding, bucks, brains, Bulgari, and her super-successful Belo Medical Group!

Bravo to our Belo-ssisima!



THE GANG OF FOUR. Il Divo's Sebastien Izambard and Carlos Marin flank woman of the hour Vicki Belo. That's Joji Dingcong on the left.

INTERNATIONAL businessman Sinai Djemal and wife Sigalit Djemal

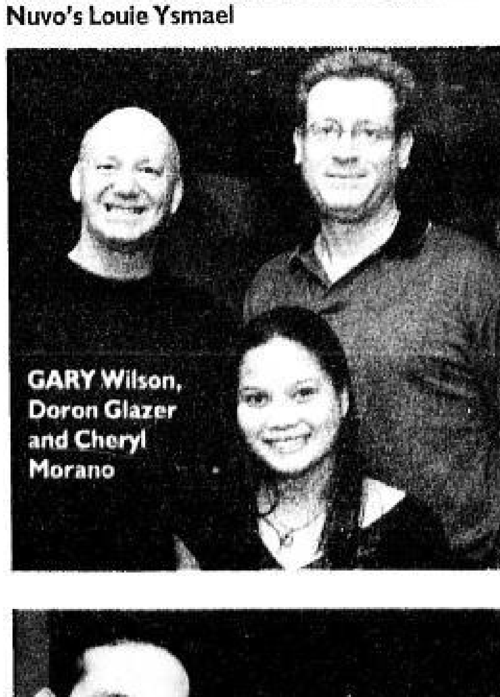
CASTILLIAN beauty Carla Tengco

JEREMY Marquez

BEAUTIFUL faces. Mac Lubaczsewski with Divine Lee and Alex Jentes

FUN PACK. Joyce Jimenez, Aubrey Miles and Troy Montero

MEN IN BLACK. Pepper Teehankee, *moi* and Nuvo's Louie Ysmael



GARY Wilson, Doron Glazer and Cheryl Morano

DANIELA Ban-Cadok, Sigalit Seldnan and Nisim Palomo

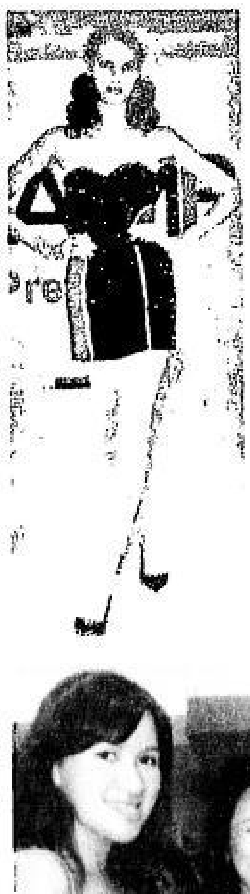
VICTOR Neri, Jojo Manlongat and Will Devaughn

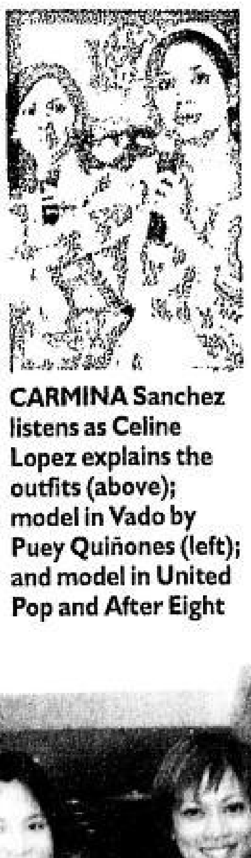
LAWYER Gabbie Concepcion, Christine Bersola Babao, action star Rudy Fernandez and newscaster Julius Babao

FRENCH Embassy's Carolle Lucas

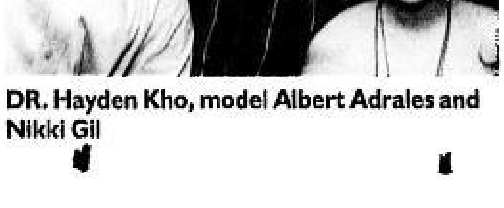
DIVINE Lee and Patrick Reyno

IL DIVO entourage members with Ara Mina

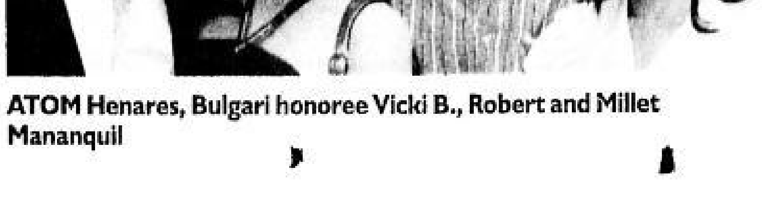




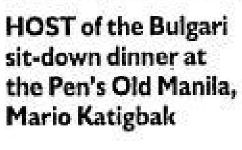
CARMINA Sanchez listens as Celine Lopez explains the outfits (above); model in Vado by Puey Quiñones (left); and model in United Pop and After Eight



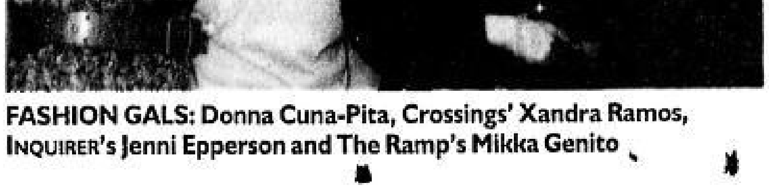
DR. Hayden Kho, model Albert Adrales and Nikki Gil



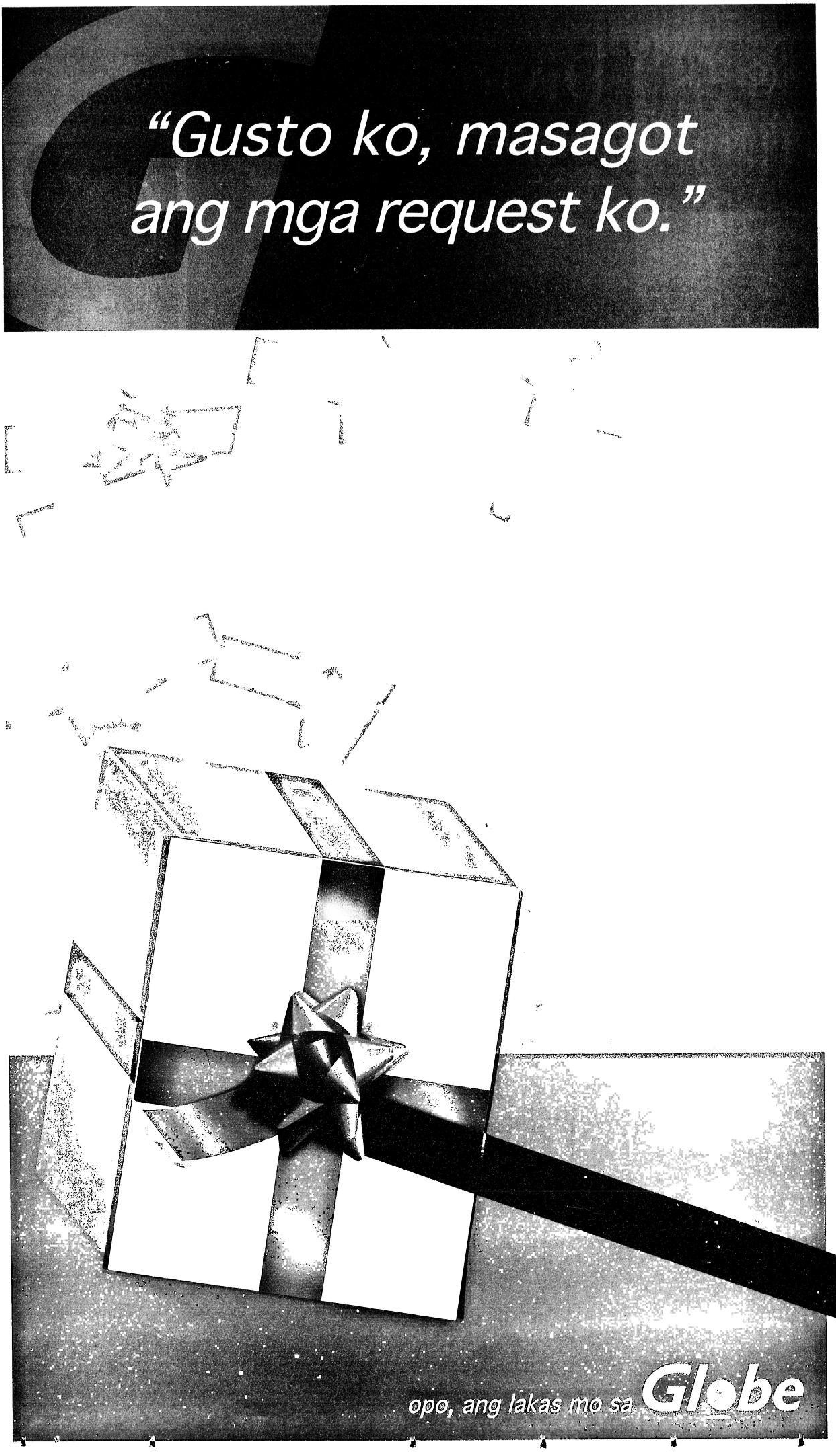
ATOM Henares, Bulgari honoree Vicki B., Robert and Millet Mananquil



HOST of the Bulgari sit-down dinner at the Pen's Old Manila, Mario Katigbak



FASHION GALS: Donna Cuna-Pita, Crossings' Xandra Ramos, INQUIRER's Jenni Epperson and The Ramp's Mikka Genito


"Gusto ko, masagot ang mga request ko."
opo, ang lakas mo sa Globe

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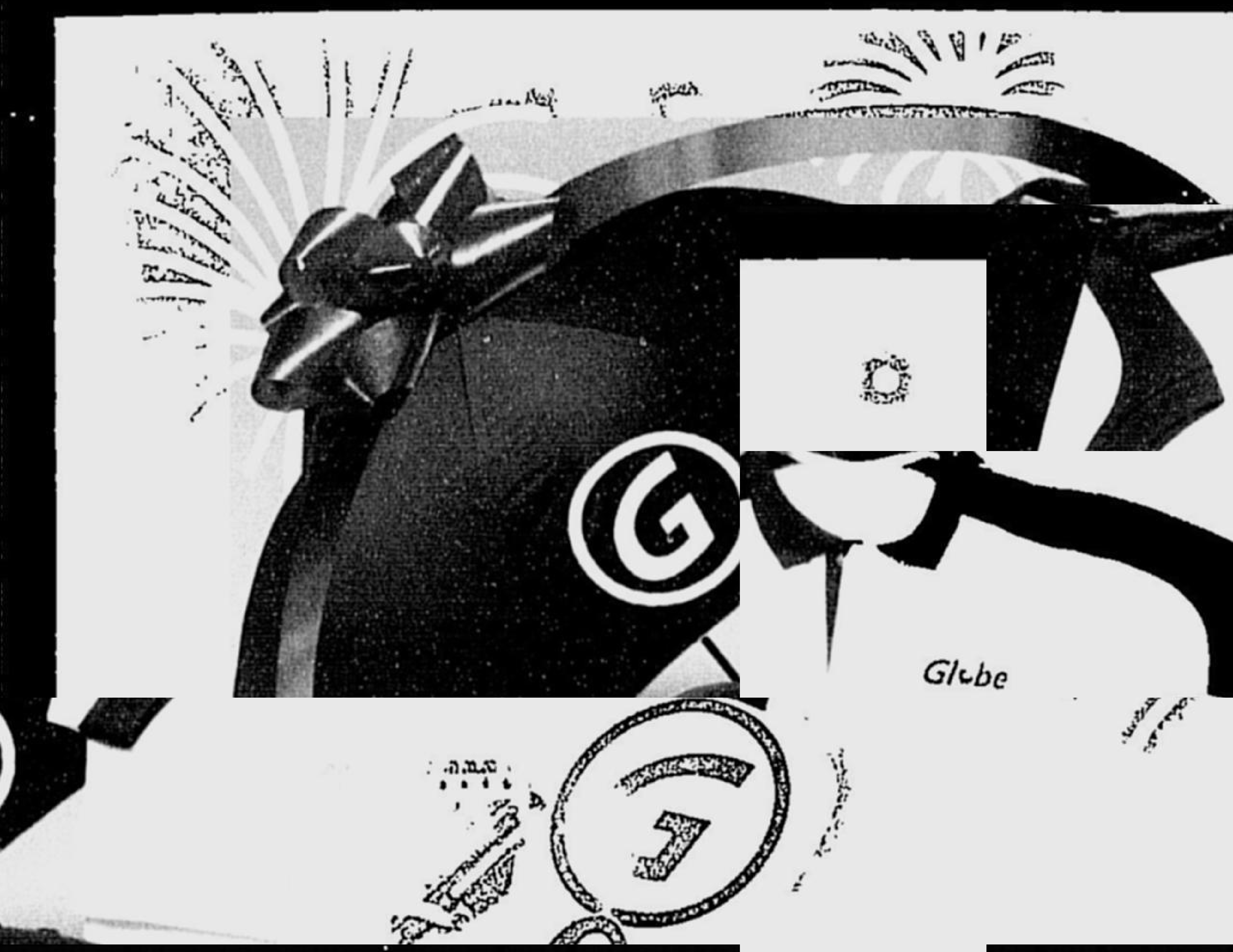
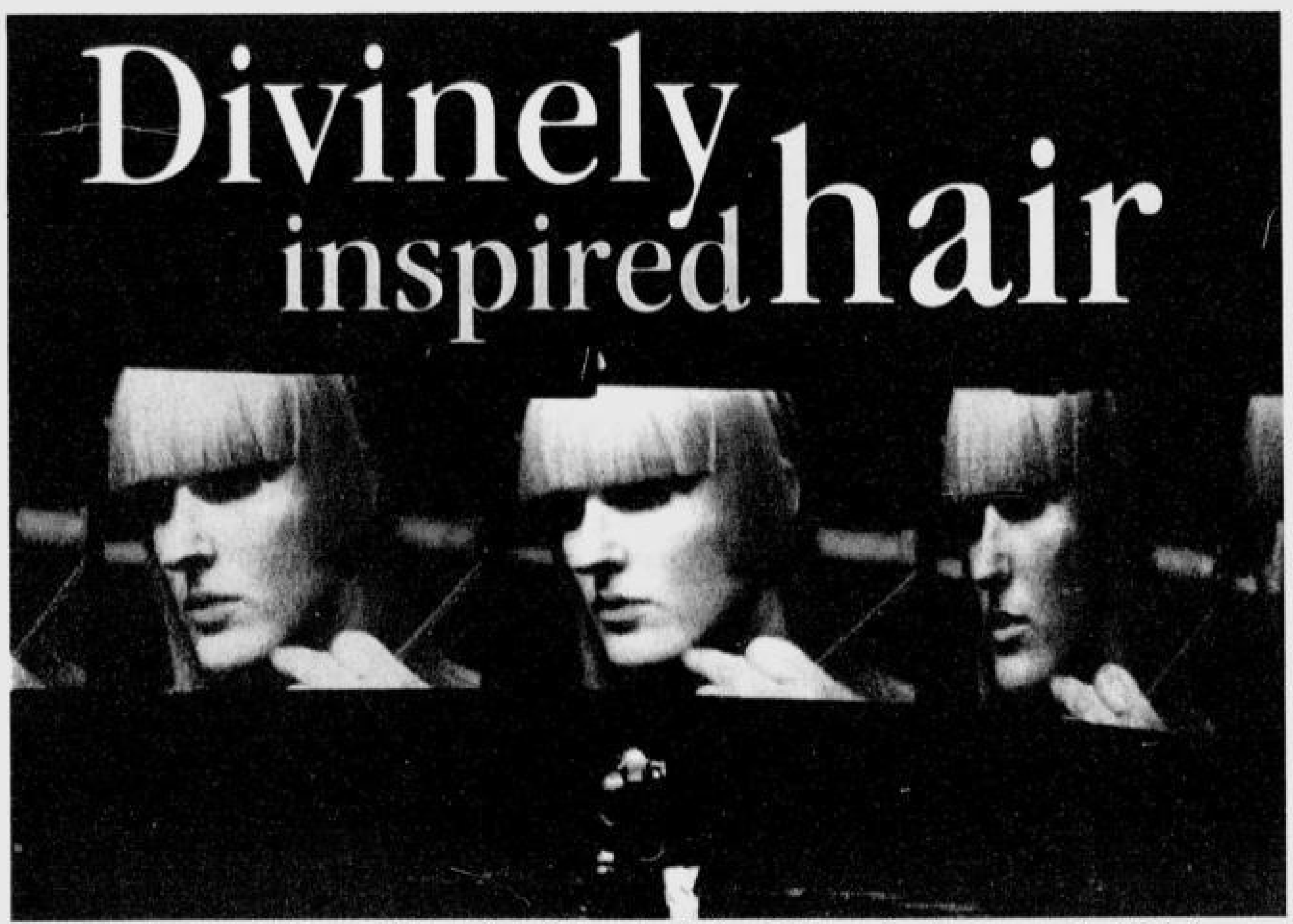


Globe

Divinely inspired hair



AN INTERPRETATION of Davines' "Serendipity" hair collection for 2007—a redux, in essence, of the '60s bob—at the Amsterdam Convention Factory in The Netherlands. Below right is Davines creative director Tim Hartley.

Davines of Italy sticks to hair technology that's effective yet eco-friendly

DAVINES founders Gianni and Silvana Bollati CHECHE MORAL

By Cheche V. Moral

THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS ALways heeded the dictates of the West when it comes to fashion trends. But when it comes to hair trends, the Italian company Davines takes a different approach: Its tack is to assemble together different cultures and influences to bring forth trends and ideas that aren't limited to locale, age or religion. In short, the "decentralization" of fashion.

This is the idea that inspired Davines' World Wide Hair Tour (WWHT), an annual congress of the world's top hair experts recently held in Amsterdam. The global event plays hosts to hair show exhibitions and seminars on the latest salon techniques. It coincides with the World Style Contest, which names the year's best hair designers.

"It's more than just a gathering," said Davines chair Davide Bollati, in an interview with the Philippine media in Amsterdam. "[It's a venue] to share the energy and optimism."

WWHT is the biggest annual event of Davines, a family-owned corporation established in 1983 in Parma, Italy, as a research laboratory and manufacturer of cosmetics and hair products for some of Europe's top salons and aesthetic centers. It wasn't until the 1990s that the firm began creating products under its own name.

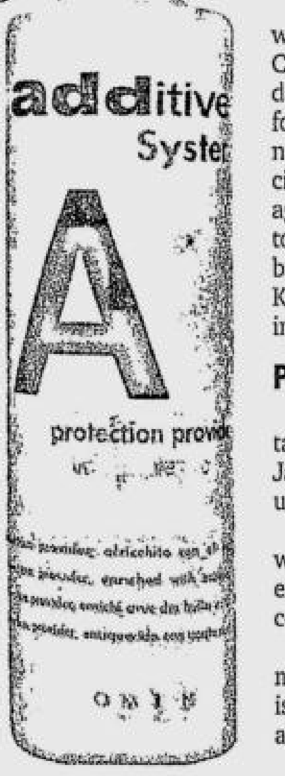
Ethical standard

Bollati, a trained chemist with a Master's in Pharmacy and cosmetics industry, may now be running Davines with his lawyer-sister, but their father Gianni, who founded the company with wife Silvana, still plays an active role in the firm. The Bollati couple, in fact, was present in Amsterdam.

"He comes in every morning and reminds me of what doesn't work," the younger Bollati said of his father. "Our company has a meritocratic environment."

Through the years, Bollati said, the Davines brand has remained true to its philosophy as conceived by his parents—to create breakthrough products by applying the latest technology while using nature's resources responsibly.

"We have an ethical standard that is at the core of the company's values," Bollati said. "We have great concern for the environment, [for] sustainable beauty. We have reduced packaging waste. The plastic used is now 40-percent thinner. [Our goal is to have] zero impact on the environment."



BEAUTY with a conscience. Davines takes pride in the responsible use of nature's resources in all its products.

DAVINES Group chair Davide Bollati and Asia business development manager Sergio Cavazanna (second and third from left) with Hair Ministry Inc. execs Jacqueline Tan, Davines business unit manager; Audra Lucero, sales and marketing director; and Armand Valencia, finance director CHECHE MORAL

Ecoluxury

Davines uses only raw and pure materials, according to Bollati, Mediterranean ingredients that were inspired by those used by Italian mammas in their kitchens—chestnut, fig, wheat, grapefruit, olive oil. The way they are used, he added, are advanced in every aspect.

"This is called ecoluxury, or providing products with an ecological approach," he noted. "The scientific trend is to give the most actual results without damaging the environment or the consumer. We aim to understand better the needs and changes of the planet." Ergo, Davines is a company with a conscience.

While other cosmetics firms are celebrity-driven, Bollati said Davines is concept-driven. It's available only in top salons in 60 countries, and the Philippines is one of its youngest markets. Contrary to its exclusive image, its local distributor, Hair Ministry Inc., claims it's no more expensive than other popular brands.

"We appreciate the dynamics of the Philippine market," Bollati said. "The response is positive, the market is curious. We want Davines to be more democratic [there] and be available in more salons."

WWHT 2006 coincided with the 4th World Style Contest (WSC) in Amsterdam. At the end of the four-day congress, it named Spain's Lidia Ricis as Best Davines Image, the top prize given to the 12 finalists. American David Lowry bagged the Best in Cut trophy, while the United Kingdom's Indy Burmi went home with the Best in Color award.

Philippine participant

The Philippines aims to field its first contestant to the WSC this year, according to Jacqueline Tan, Hair Ministry Inc.'s business unit manager for Davines.

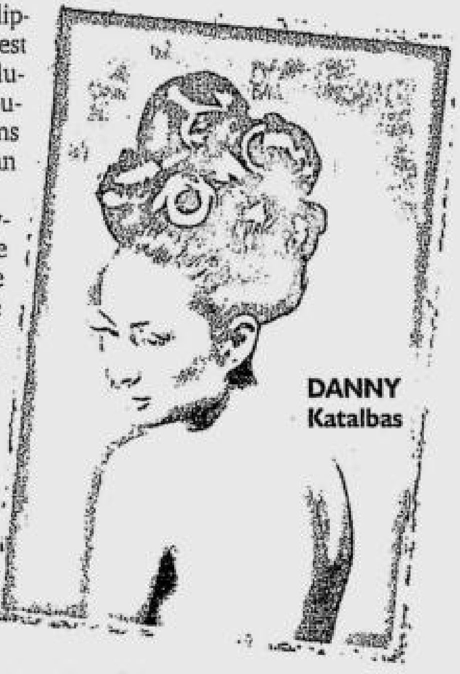
The search for a Philippine representative was kicked off here in November with a photo exhibit of hair couture styles by some of the country's top names in the industry.

The photos, taken by Raymund Isaac, were made into a 2007 calendar (sold at Hair Ministry's offices for P750; tel. 6870424/1156), and comes with the contest form.

The local winner will vie for one of the final 12 spots in Italy, after which s/he will compete for the top awards in Barcelona, Spain, later this year.

The top prize is a feature in an international trade magazine, plus an all-expense paid trip to the next competition where s/he will get a chance to demo her/his winning techniques onstage.

HAIR couture by Stefan Wilczynski. Above, Pin Antonio



DANNY Katalbas

Geometric bobs

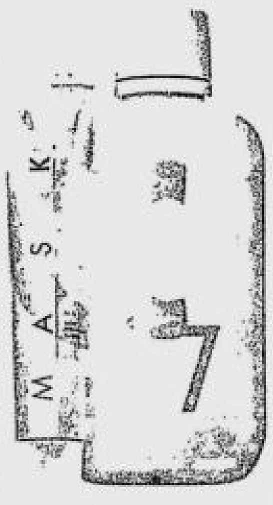
At the WWHT 2006 Davines also introduced its new creative director, Tim Hartley, former international creative director of Vidal Sassoon, where he worked for 32 years.

Hartley said hair trends this year will be dominated by geometric bobs. Longer lengths will have more defined shapes with the use of the point-cutting technique.

The natural movement of wavy hair will also be fashionable, he added. For those with blonde ambitions, he suggested hair colors in sandy and apricot tones, as these will look best on the Filipina's *morena* skintone.

Hartley said it's always worth investing on a great haircut, though he added the $1,000 charged by some celebrity hairstylists is "just to create buzz."

Himself a celebrity who has cut the hair of Sienna Miller, Milla Jovovich, Uma Thurman and Scarlett Johannson, the portly Englishman said that, ultimately, "you get what you pay for, same with the products you use. You pay for the experience."



LOOK by Kenti Tam

HAIR MUSEUM PHOTOS: RAYMUND ISAAC

LIFE-STYLED
Thelma Sioson San Juan

The 'devilets' wear Prada

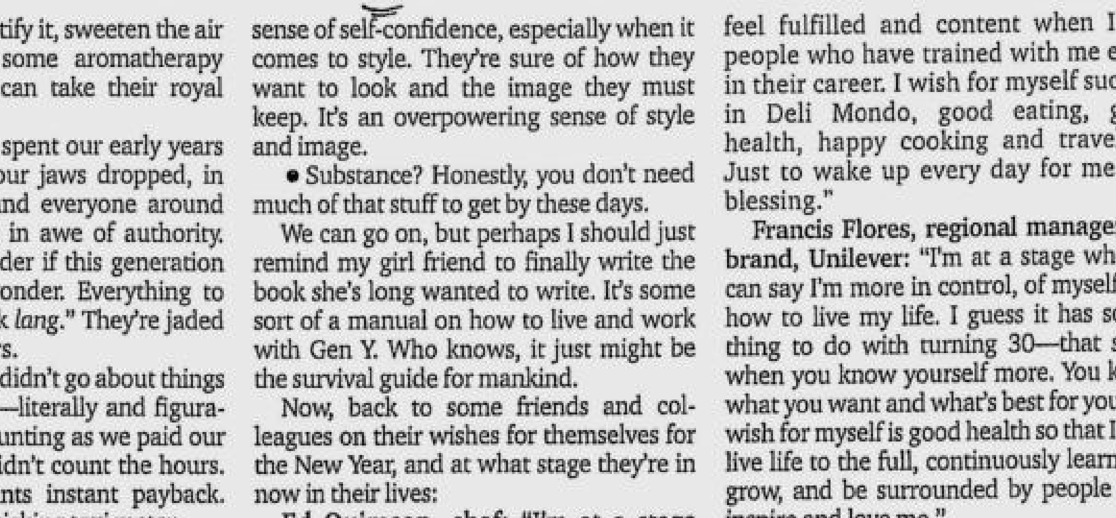


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

RUNNING ON MY MIND THESE days is my local version of the Oscars favorite "The Devil Wears Prada" for which **Meryl Streep** has just won the Golden Globe. If I were to write the Philippine version, it'll be "The Devilets wear Prada."

I have this recurring talk— whine, actually—with a friend who is a fashion retail executive about the Generation Y and what it's like to work with them. My friend is at the peak of her career, a power unto herself—lucky indeed, but she also has the tough luck of having to manage, or at least deal with, a gazillion of post-teens and twentysomethings in her job.

Actually it's a recurrent topic I have had with colleagues and bosses far and wide: how to manage Gen Y in the workplace, especially in the lifestyle business, this generation with an overpowering sense of belief—in themselves.

For those who have been living under a rock, "The Devil…" was the much-talked-about movie of '06 where Streep plays Miranda Priestley, the powerful magazine editor who's imperious, capricious, cruel and bratty—devilish, in other words—but mighty successful.

In real life, my friend observes, these Gen Yers can be bratty and demanding—indeed, have a sense of entitlement—without first having the successful track record to warrant it, as if you owe them. (It's the generation that demands a byline, lest it sues for such omission, without first having to learn its grammar.)

In case you find yourself having the same challenging task of managing a floorful of Gen Yers, as my friend has, this might come in handy. Get to know them and accept that they're different. Let me tick off the ways you and I might be different from them:

- Our generation grew up wanting to save the world, but first we read up on that world, even had teach-ins. Of course, as it'd turn out, that was just a passing messianic complex, and some of the stuff we read were wrong, we realized later. This generation doesn't exactly want to save or change the world; you sometimes get the feeling it couldn't care less. But it wants to have its grand place in it. But and this is a big but—you must set up the place for them. Tidy it up, prettify it, sweeten the air they breathe with some aromatherapy spray, so that they can take their royal place in it.
- Our generation spent our early years in the work place, our jaws dropped, in awe of everything and everyone around us. We were always in awe of authority. Sometimes you wonder if this generation has any sense of wonder. Everything to them seems to be "ok *lang*." They're jaded way before their years.
- Our generation didn't go about things using the calculator—literally and figuratively. We weren't counting as we paid our dues. At work, we didn't count the hours. This generation wants instant payback. Can't wait. It's like a ticking taxi meter.
- Don't take it for granted that they hear you. They may not know how to listen because their attention span is gone in split seconds. If you want them to hear you, do a Podcast.
- They may have substituted bitchiness for critical thinking. Not their fault. It's the literature and media available to them.
- Our generation didn't have the self-confidence. The Gen Y has a palpable sense of self-confidence, especially when it comes to style. They're sure of how they want to look and the image they must keep. It's an overpowering sense of style and image.
- Substance? Honestly, you don't need much of that stuff to get by these days.

We can go on, but perhaps I should just remind my girl friend to finally write the book she's long wanted to write. It's some sort of a manual on how to live and work with Gen Y. Who knows, it just might be the survival guide for mankind.

Now, back to some friends and colleagues on their wishes for themselves for the New Year, and at what stage they're in now in their lives:

Ed Quimson, chef: "I'm at a stage where I would like to share my art form with a broader range of food aficionados by making gourmet food more accessible and less expensive. I'm in a new endeavor with **Katrina Ponce Enrile**, who has given me the creative freedom to provide food lovers easy access to gourmet food at prices more affordable than most. In Deli Mondo Food Specialties, we plan to make these available. I feel fulfilled and content when I see people who have trained with me excel in their career. I wish for myself success in Deli Mondo, good eating, good health, happy cooking and traveling. Just to wake up every day for me is a blessing."

Francis Flores, regional manager for brand, Unilever: "I'm at a stage where I can say I'm more in control, of myself and how to live my life. I guess it has something to do with turning 30—that stage when you know yourself more. You know what you want and what's best for you. My wish for myself is good health so that I may live life to the full, continuously learn and grow, and be surrounded by people who inspire and love me."

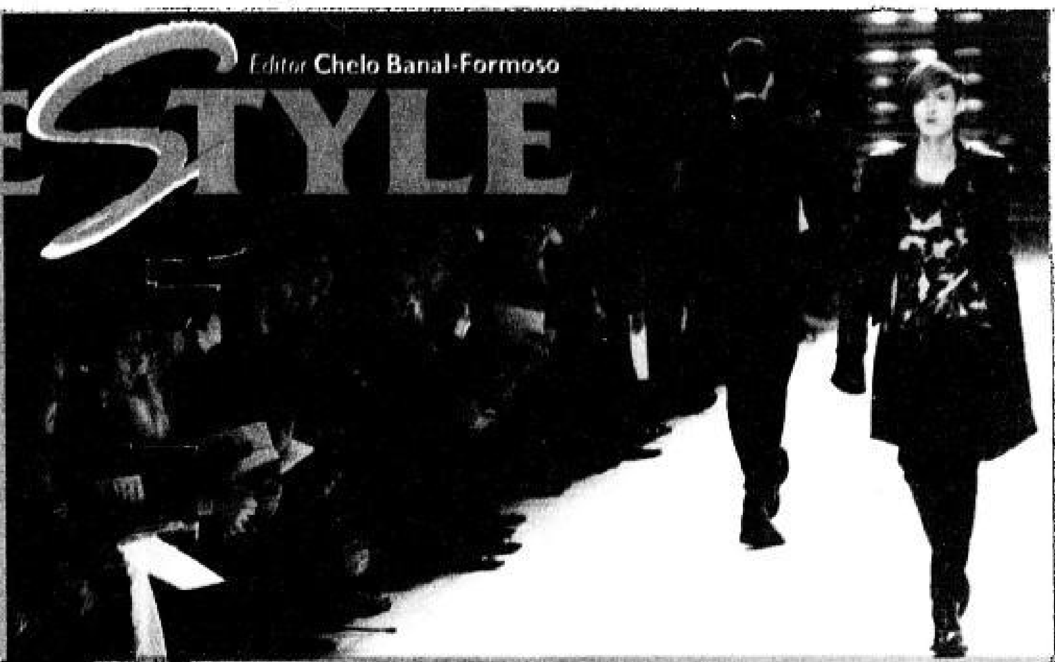
Aurora Go, head of Foundation for Adolescent Development: "I'm aware of only three stages—infancy, adolescence and adulthood. You can expand adulthood to early, middle and late. I'm genetically at my late [stage] but socially, emotionally and sexually, I'm early. My wish is to get our THQ franchise adopted by mayors of Calookan, Quezon City, Las Piñas, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Makati and Manila."

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

FASHION

FROM red carpet to prom party /D2



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DIOR homme fashion /D4

PRESCRIPTION for bag addicts /E2

A TRIBUTE to Christian Espiritu /D3

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the second time around.

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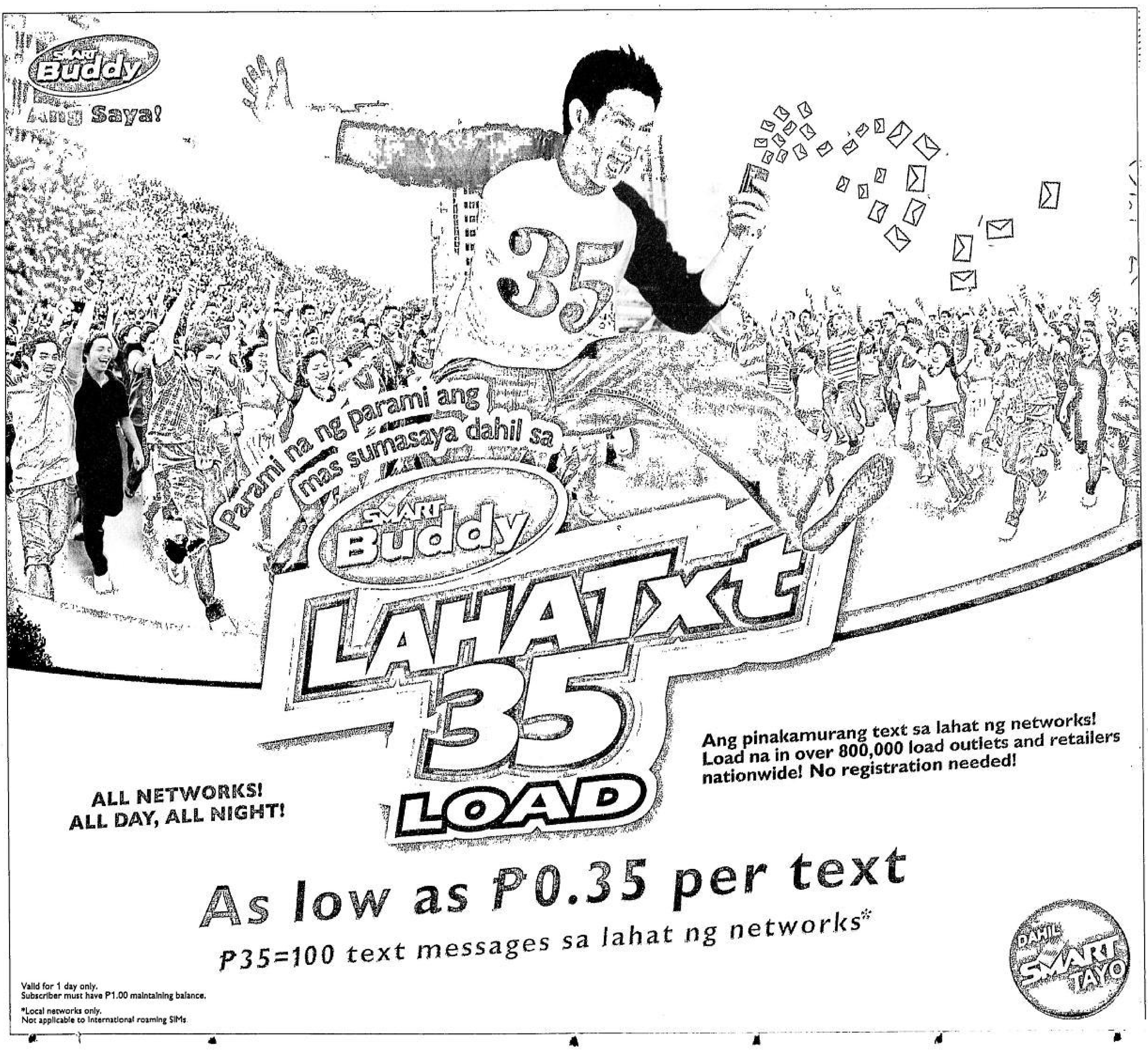

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From red-carpet queen to prom queen

The movie awards season presents a cornucopia of useful styles for prom night

Mabuhay!

Jenni Epperson

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR again when all eyes are fixed on the world's most famous catwalk—the Hollywood red carpet.

The recent Golden Globes and Screen Actors Guild Awards had every girl glued to the tube to glimpse what designer couture the stars would be wearing.

Traditionally, the Golden Globes and the Oscars sparkle with formality, while the SAG Awards call for a less formal dress code in favor of party-hard attire, the better to move effortlessly back and forth from the champagne station!

And where better to look for inspiration than the stars! Girls attending their prom will be channeling their inner Angelina Jolies and hope to transform from Ugly Bettys into beautiful swans—um, okay, let's avoid swans when talking about red-carpet fashion (unless we want to resurrect Bjork's ghost of fashion victims past).

Just like the A-list red-carpet stunners, young girls will go through the same fashion and beauty ordeals. The list of to-do's is a long one, from booking a makeup artist to choosing a designer, buying the perfect accessories and, of course, finding the best arm accessory of all in the form of a handsome date!

But watching the red carpet events makes it a tad easier for many as it gives them a quick look on what gowns are hot, and what trends are in the style radar this season.

Prom

Since the prom is one of the most memorable events in a girl's life because it would be her very first formal or semi-formal event, it is important to choose a gown or a cocktail dress that suits your personality.

If you are not comfortable in a gown, do a Reese Witherspoon and opt for a shimmery cocktail dress. If you're not used to wearing high heels, wear sparkly ballet flats—it's effortlessly chic!

A welcome plus this awards season is seeing many actresses with different, more realistic body types.

We've seen voluptuous stars as America Ferrera and Jennifer Hudson grace the red carpet (and hold on to their trophies) with A-plus style, which makes it easier for more girls to imagine what cuts and silhouettes can suit them.

earth tones earth tones earth tones earth tones earth tones eart

AMERICA Ferrera

EDIE Falco

MARISKA Hargitay

ELLEN Pompeo

PHOTOS WWW.PEOPLE.COM

short order short order short order short order short order

MARY-LOUISE Parker

RACHEL McAdams

SARA Ramirez

According to Stef, a student from an all-girl school, she "got inspiration from Minnie Driver's red-carpet gown but used only the top part as the inspiration."

She has always wanted to wear a ball skirt so she had a separate skirt made. To personalize it, she chose orange because it's her favorite color.

When choosing a gown, be sure that you'll be able to dance, prance and participate in the event rather than being stuck in your seat because the gown you're wearing is either too tight or too revealing that every move you make is a possible demerit from Mother Superior.

If you try too hard to do a Drew but end up self-conscious the rest of the night, you'll just be a failure in social studies!

A word of fashion caution—don't let the style of Hollywood stars blind you from what's really important. Personal style, confidence and a positive attitude shine brighter than any bejeweled actress posing on the red carpet.

The paparazzi are ready for you. Lights, camera, fashion!

E-mail the author at jfashion@inquirer.com.ph

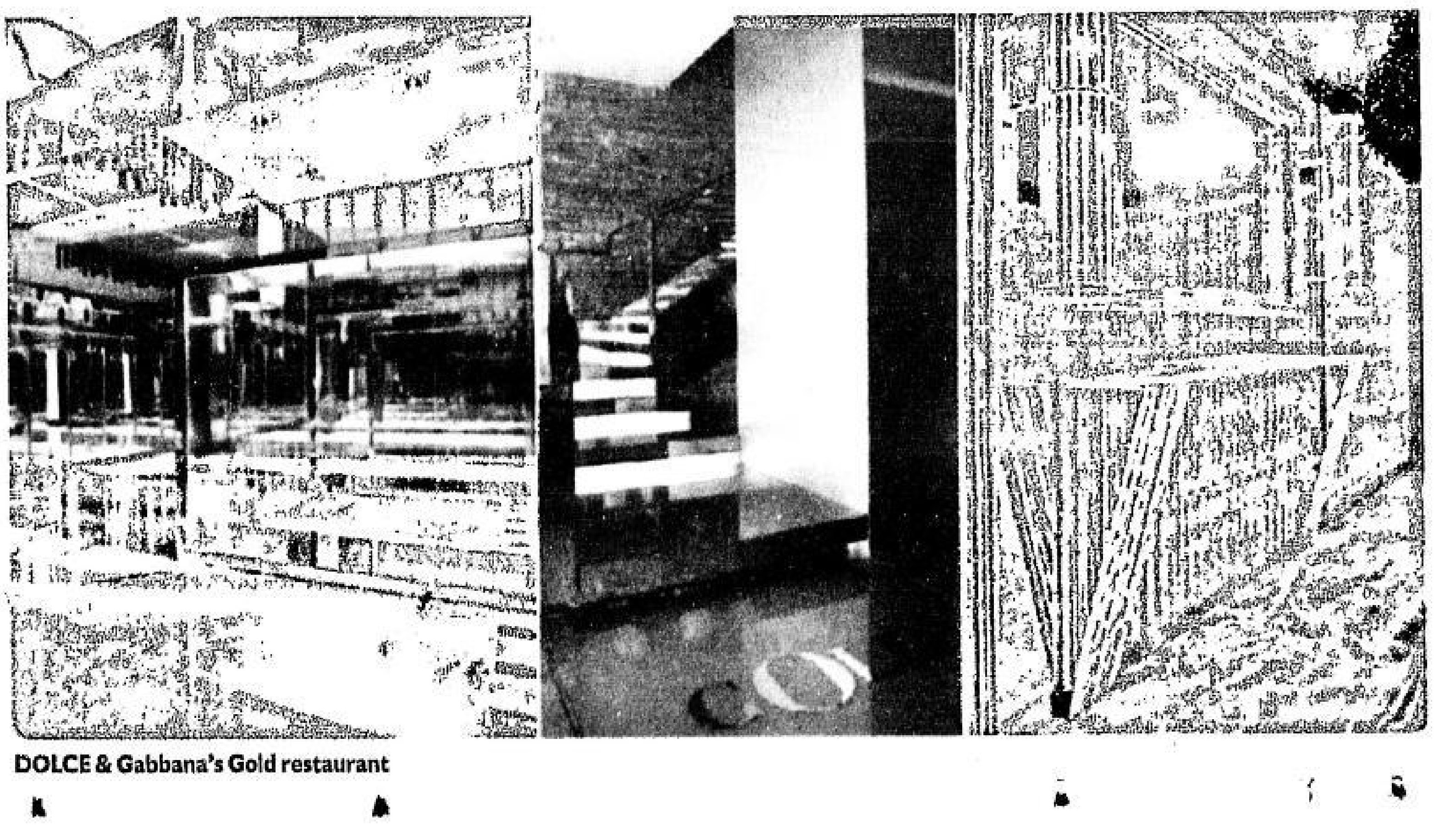
fashion flash!

Haute plate

DESIGNERS DOMENICO Dolce and Stefano Gabbana have the Midas touch.

First was their gold mobile phone. Now there's Gold the restaurant. Keeping within the theme of their limited-edition gold mobile phone with Motorola, the dynamic duo has opened a new restaurant in Milan, Italy, aptly named Gold.

Now, you can literally eat, breathe and wear Dolce & Gabbana.

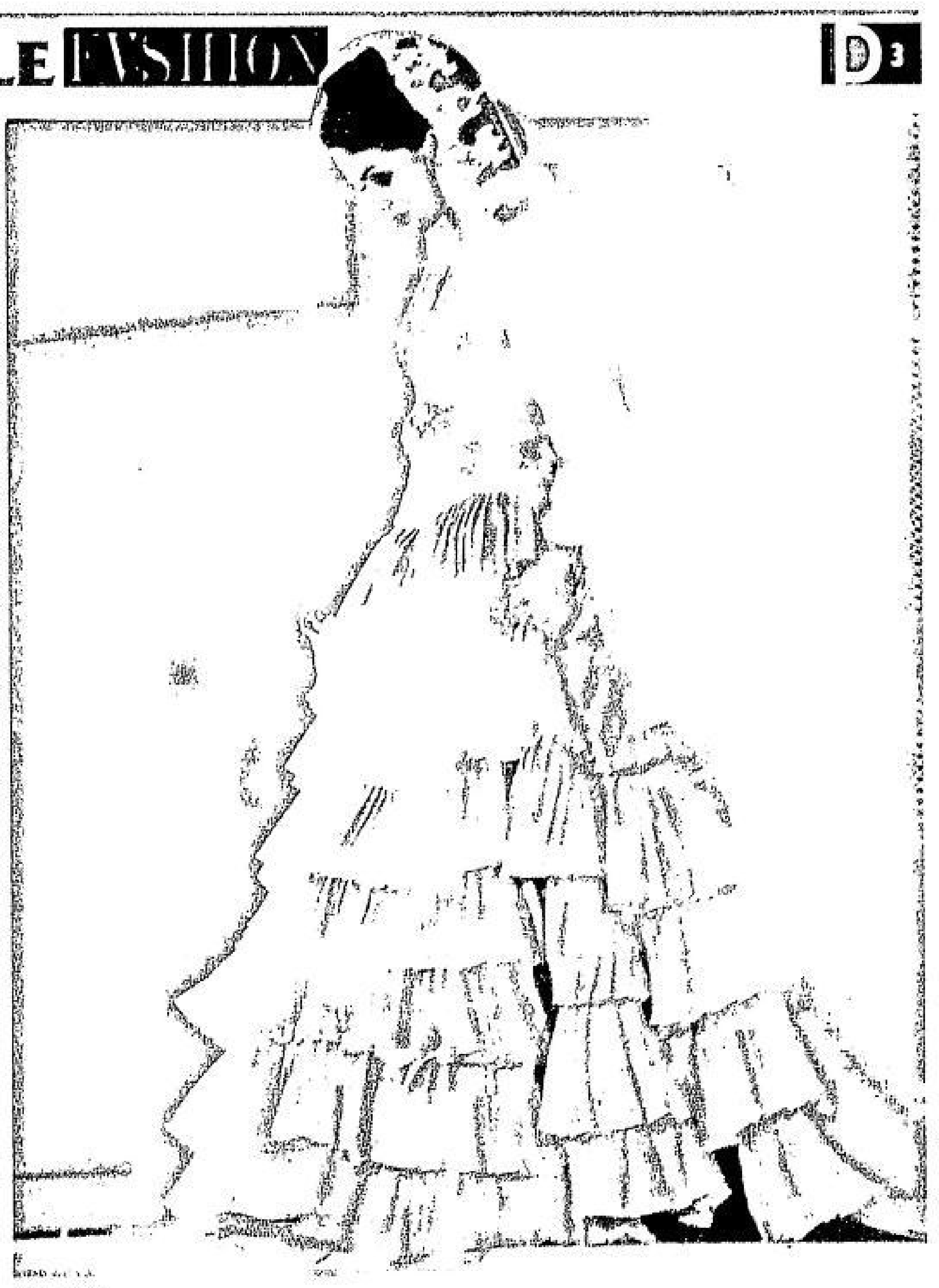

DOLCE & Gabbana's Gold restaurant

DIAZ

JIMENEZ

DYSANGCO

CARLOS


CARLOS

Everything but the man

The recently staged 'Pamana ng Parañaque' at the Casino Grand Filipino Theater paid homage to Christian Espiritu, one of the city's most famous sons

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Vecina

THE FASHION SHOW WAS meant as a tribute by the Parañaque government, led by Mayor Florencio Bernabe Jr. and wife Girlie, to erstwhile fashion designer Christian Espiritu, one of the city's most famous sons. It was also intended to drum up interest in culture via a yet-to-be-built city museum.

But before the night was over, the recently staged "Pamana ng Parañaque" at the Casino Grand Filipino Theater also became a medium for Imelda Marcos, the evening's guest of honor, to relive her glory days as the other half of the "Conjugal Dictatorship."

As the country's then-First Lady, Imelda was photographed traipsing the world over in many a Christian Espiritu terno during her "groundbreaking" meetings with the likes of Mao Zedong and Muammar Gaddafi. True to form, she didn't pass up the chance to remind (and regale) her captive audience about it.

The look, which Imelda perfected to an art form, earned her the moniker "Iron Butterfly." Looking resplendent despite the years, the terno-clad "Madame" rumbled extemporaneously on variations of her favorite theme: "the true, the good and the beautiful."

For a moment, Espiritu almost became like an afterthought. He'd have probably become one had not for the clothes featured earlier by his younger colleagues from Parañaque as well as by his former protégés led by the celebrated Inno Sotto.

The Parañaque-based designers, who seemed to have shown everything but their mothers' baptismal dresses, were composed of Jun-jun Cambe, Peri Diaz, Serge Jimenez, Boyet Dysangco and Parrish Espiritu Carlos.

Aside from Sotto, Espiritu's former apprentices included Loretto, Gang Gomez, Barge Ramos and Joji Lloren. Unlike their more gung-ho colleagues from the city, Sotto and company opted for more restraint by showing a few of their best pieces from past collections.

In the case of Sotto and Loretto, the two veteran designers were content to show one wedding gown each. Ramos did away with dresses and focused on what he does best: untraditional barongs for the modern man.

The same moderation, however, eluded Cambe and cohorts as they pulled out every known trick in the design book to upstage one another. Their enthusiasm was quite admirable, as some numbers managed to make their marks.

Diaz's black-and-white pieces with polka-dotted trims were pleasing on the eyes and, if toned down a bit, very wearable. Taking his cue perhaps from Sotto (circa 2003), he also displayed a penchant for clean, simple lines via a duchess satin wedding gown embellished with a huge ribbon and series of brooches.

His outfit for the groom—which included a long jacket made of off-white brocade—was, however, too costumey to pass for a "normal" wedding. You'd probably have to be the King of Siam to pull it off.

DIAZ

CHRISTIAN Espiritu with former muses Tingting Cojuangco and Imelda Marcos

Carlos was also able to make his mark via loose, satin pantsuits adorned with cabbage roses. Although they're a bit predictable, they managed to look smart, wearable and far from boring.

He also did a number of interesting gowns that combined ruffles, feathers and hints of beadwork. One column, however, appeared too tight on the already reed-thin model.

Haphazard editing

Alas, not a few of the collections suffered from haphazard editing! Fashion, like cinema and the written word, needs some semblance of logic and order, which can be achieved most of the time through huge doses of self-control.

Cases in point: Cambe's summer ensemble made of "kukur"-like chiffon fabrics (read: curtain materials) tended to repeat itself. The pieces weren't beyond redemption, but they weren't original either. The major trouble was, they were permutations of similar looks that swayed to the tune of "more of the same."

Cambe, who showed his knowledge of technique relating to ruching, embroidery and embellishment, fared better doing formal gowns.

Velasco, on the other hand, took the razzle-dazzle approach (perfected to a science by the likes of Pitoy Moreno and Frederick Peralta) by embellishing his ternos with all sorts of beads—even "sensurround" capiz shells—known to man. Fine.

In his haste to decorate, however, he seemed to have forgotten about proportions, as exemplified by one glaringly ugly petticoat (it came with a short white terno fused with a separate long skirt that mimicked the color of jute sack) that seemed to have a life of its own.

Dysangco was in a different level altogether. His idea of a collection, composed of clingy numbers made of red and black stretch jersey held together by bra straps, needed more than just editing. They ought to have been scrapped, period.

Apart from being unoriginal (hello, Dolce & Gabbana, circa 19-forgotten), the pieces were ill-fitting and betrayed poor construction and imagination. Not only were they more of the same, they were more of the same bad elements that recurred over and over again like the reappearance of a hideously dressed villainess in some bad dream.

Dysangco blew his one last chance to redeem himself by fashioning a wedding ensemble for his and hers that echoed almost the same shortcomings mentioned above.

The groom sported a white jacket that came with sleeves and shoulders that were far too long and far too broad, while the bride wore a tacky mini skirt with a built-in petticoat and a pillbox hat we've seen done to death a gazillion times in the 1980s.

Amid the hullabaloo, Espiritu, seated beside former muses Tingting Cojuangco and Imelda, quietly and graciously "endured" the show.

For some strange reason, none of the featured Parañaque designers seemed to have taken their cue from Espiritu's linear and structured design sensibilities.

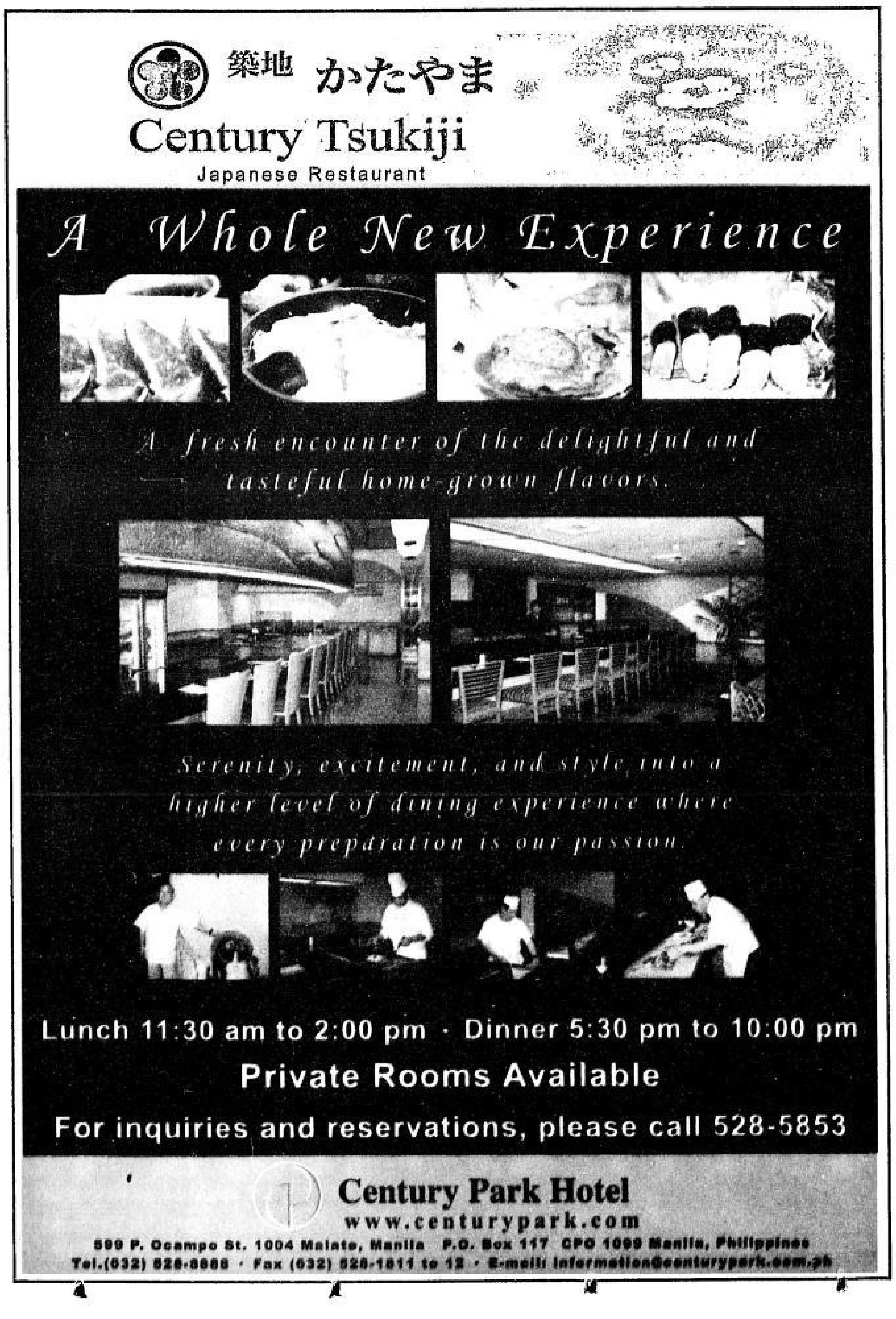
Stranger still, organizers failed to secure even a piece or two of his finest works to show to a new generation of fashionistas.

A retrospective, similar to the one mounted by Metro Magazine for Joe Salazar, would have been a much more fitting tribute to a man who made a name for himself dressing up the then most powerful woman in the Philippines.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

CAMBE

DYSANGCO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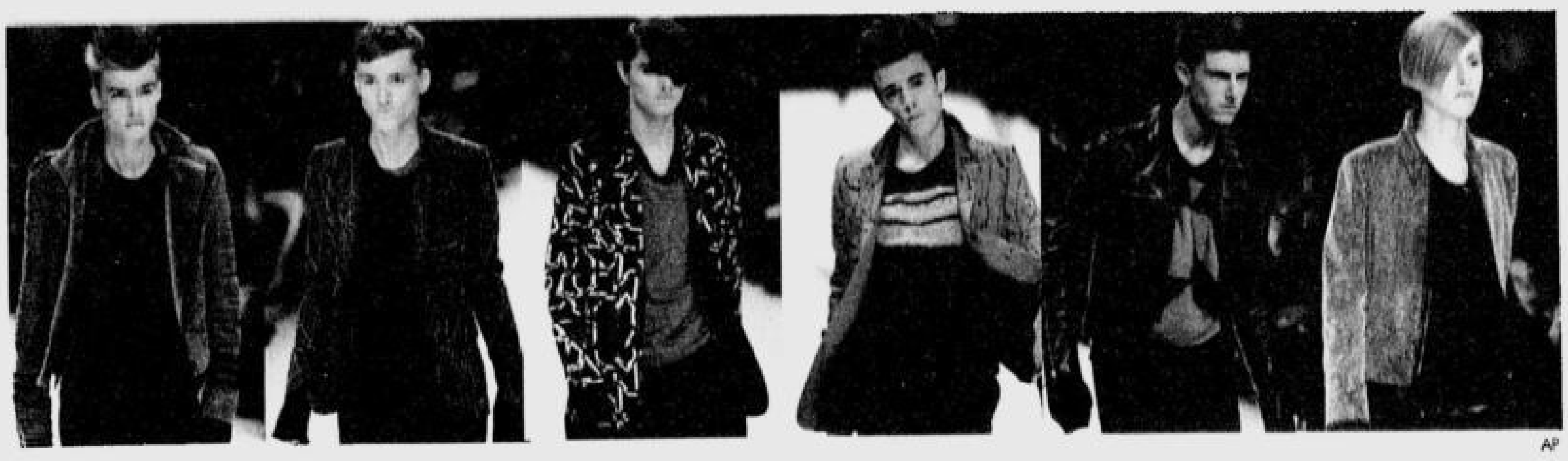
Nonchalant glamour wraps up menswear shows



AP

HEDI SLIMANE for Dior Autumn-winter 2007-2008 men's fashion collection AFP

PARIS—HEDI SLIMANE OFFERED A dynamic winter menswear collection for Dior that seemed like a fond teenage memory, wrapping up a week of catwalk shows in the French capital.

Slimane's nonchalant glamour brought to mind hours spent as a teenager getting ready to go out while trying to look like no effort had been made at all.

Fueled with plenty of "so what" attitude, models marched up the catwalk late Tuesday in little jackets with collars turned up and sweater sleeves hanging below the cuff covering their hands.

Their New Romantic hairstyles, dramatically swept to one side or back-combed, added an '80s flavor, but Slimane captured a sense of effortless chic that seemed thoroughly modern.

With all the glamour of youth and in mostly heavy rock-star black and gray, the collection provided a punchy finale to five days of catwalk shows for autumn-winter 2007-2008 by leading menswear designers.

"A memory of adolescence," Slimane said of his collection after the show backstage, pointing to the mid-'80s and recalling a club he used to go to when he was a teenager.

The slight silhouette traditionally favored by Slimane was loosened up a bit with "saroual," or baggy North African-style trousers. Layering long shirts under shorter jackets also softened the look.

Two from Japan

Earlier in the day, two Japanese labels made their debut in the French capital with two distinct approaches to men's style.

Having presented his collections in Tokyo until now, Kiminori Morishita said, speaking through an interpreter, that he had decided to bring his wardrobe focused on a richness of materials to Paris because "it's the city of fashion."

With the fabrics all produced in Japan, including traditional Hogushi print technique and reproduced 19th-century materials, the wardrobe seemed destined for a young aristocrat.

Jodhpur-inspired trousers and long boots looked fit for a day's riding, while clean-cut models in flying jackets and white scarves had an air of a dashing aviator. A perfectly proportioned bell-shaped cape was one of the highlights.

At Miharayasuhiro, which has shown its collections in Milan since 2004, the theme of piecing together different materials for texture and colors ran throughout—a trench coat had a knitted back while the front and shoulders were in a contrasting material.

Woollen panels vertically ran up trouser legs, even shoes were boldly half-metallic and half-black. A play on long and short was also part of the equation, with hems geometrically cut out shorter at the front.

The clothes had a sense of careful consideration in their design with a vitality and wearability, although a grey woolen jumpsuit zipped up the front might well require an adventurous spirit.

For the day's most original catwalk decor, German designer Bernhard Willhelm's montage of wicker basket models, a miniature snow-covered mountain, giant bratwurst and yodeling was hard to beat.

He returned to an Alpine theme with a checked smock opening the high-altitude attire that included non-leather lederhosen-type trousers over long woolly socks, knitted ensembles and hiking boots. *AFP*

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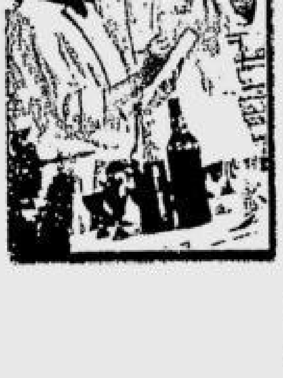

AICA's Fundamentals of Professional Cooking will train you into becoming a very confident cook in a professional and recreational manner. The 16-session course allows you to produce any recipe imaginable and is available in weekday and weekend schedules.
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FASHION BUZZ

Hot, haute, hot news!

Long-legs Lohan

A few months ago, Inquirer Fashion Buzz wrote about Lindsay Lohan as the new Miu Miu celebrity endorser.

Well, the much-awaited advertising campaign is already out!

Hello? Is that you, Lindsay? Why are your legs so long? Does this mean when we buy Miu Miu pants, our legs will be as elongated?

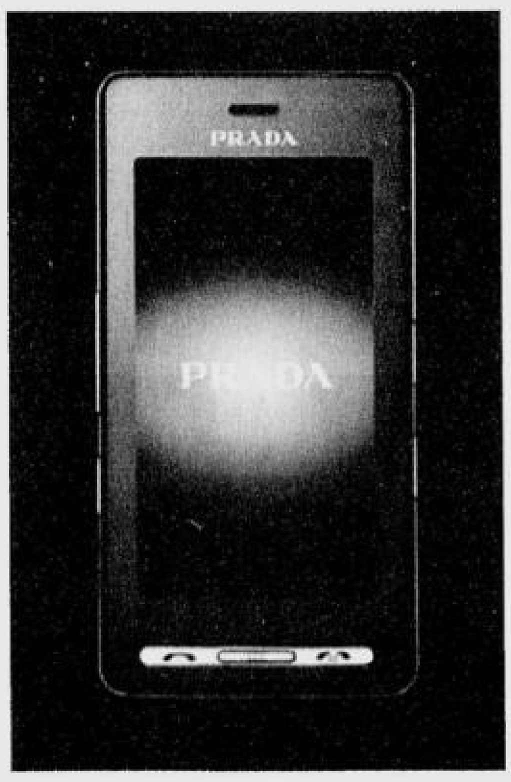
LINDSAY Lohan for Miu Miu

Co-worker

Guess who's the next hot team-up in the rag trade? It's Ensembles, known for its sophisticated smart casuals, and hip designer James Reyes, known for his whimsical creations.

The two have joined forces to cook up wonderful work wear for the Bundy clock set. Watch out for Reyes's sleek and sexy creations this coming summer!

JAMES Reyes



Fashion calling

Korea's LG Electronics recently teamed up with fashion giant Prada to produce one of fashion's must-have accessories this season: The LG Prada mobile phone (model KE850).

Leave it to Miuccia Prada to design what LG terms "the world's first advanced touch interface." The designer who marches to her own fashion beat with her modern and "intellectual" designs will launch the super skinny (12mm), modern 2Mpixel camera, with lens from the Kreuznach-Schneider factory mobile phone.

Prada disciples are soon to bow and pay top dollars to get this mobile phone, which will be available by February around Europe.

According to LG, countries in Asia, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, can expect the phone late March.

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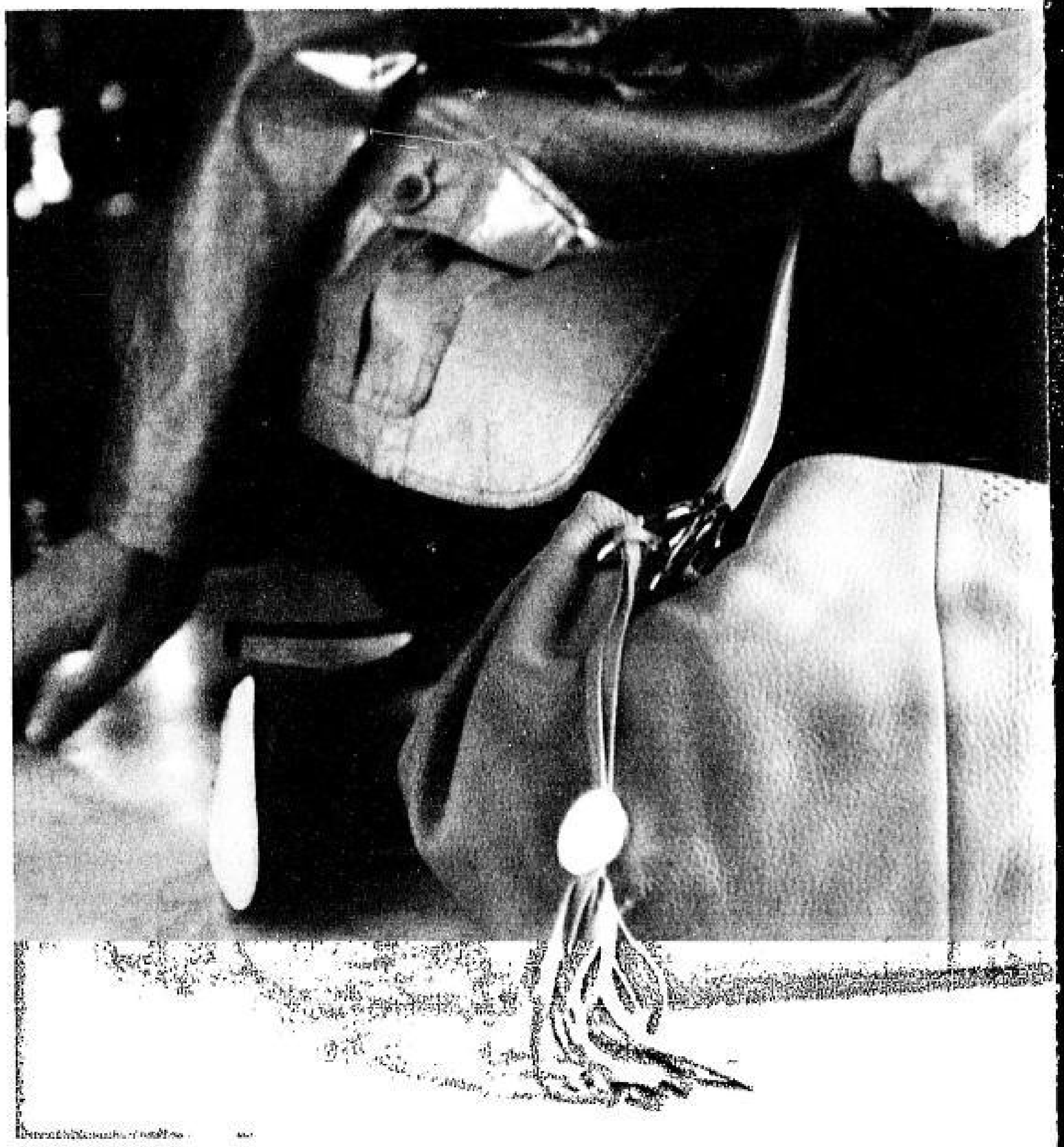
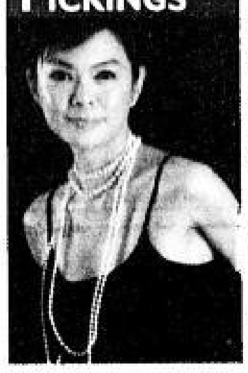
Rustan Marketing Specialists, Inc. (RMSI) is the official franchisee of Marks & Spencer in the Philippines.

HAVANA Shopper bag in red, Furla New Vanessa bracelet, Kenneth Cole black pumps



Rx for bag

APPLES' PICKINGS



Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

I'M A SELF-CONFESSED bag addict. I love all sorts of bags, from classics like the Hermes Birkin and Chanel 2.55 to more modern pieces like the YSL Muse or Balenciaga motorcycle bag. This doesn't mean I possess all these must-have totes or that I prefer designer bags to generic pieces. Form and function, and not merely designer labels (not always, anyway!), are utmost in my list when choosing a bag. Bag heaven, of course, is when you find the perfect combination of all these!

That's why I was elated when Furla, an Italian brand that's renowned for its fine leather goods and accessories, opened its first store in Manila a couple of years back. I first noticed the brand over 10 years ago during one of my trips to Milan. Even then, I observed that Furla items were of good quality and design. And now that Store Specialists Inc. is the distributor of the brand, I'm certain that Furla will make a high-profile comeback in the local retail market.

Furla has been in existence for 80 years now. It offers the finest quality purses, belts, scarves and accessories and is known for its trademark functional and feminine design. It is constantly included in the "Editor's Picks" sections of Elle, InStyle, Vogue and Women's Wear Daily.

For 2007, Furla's remarkable bag collection offers roomy carryalls and structured totes that feature luxe surface treatments—from cutouts in patent and reptile-stamped calf leather to silk screened flowers. Colors are vivid and vibrant with lime, maracuja and red, which can definitely add plenty of pop to anyone's wardrobe basics, dominating the collection.

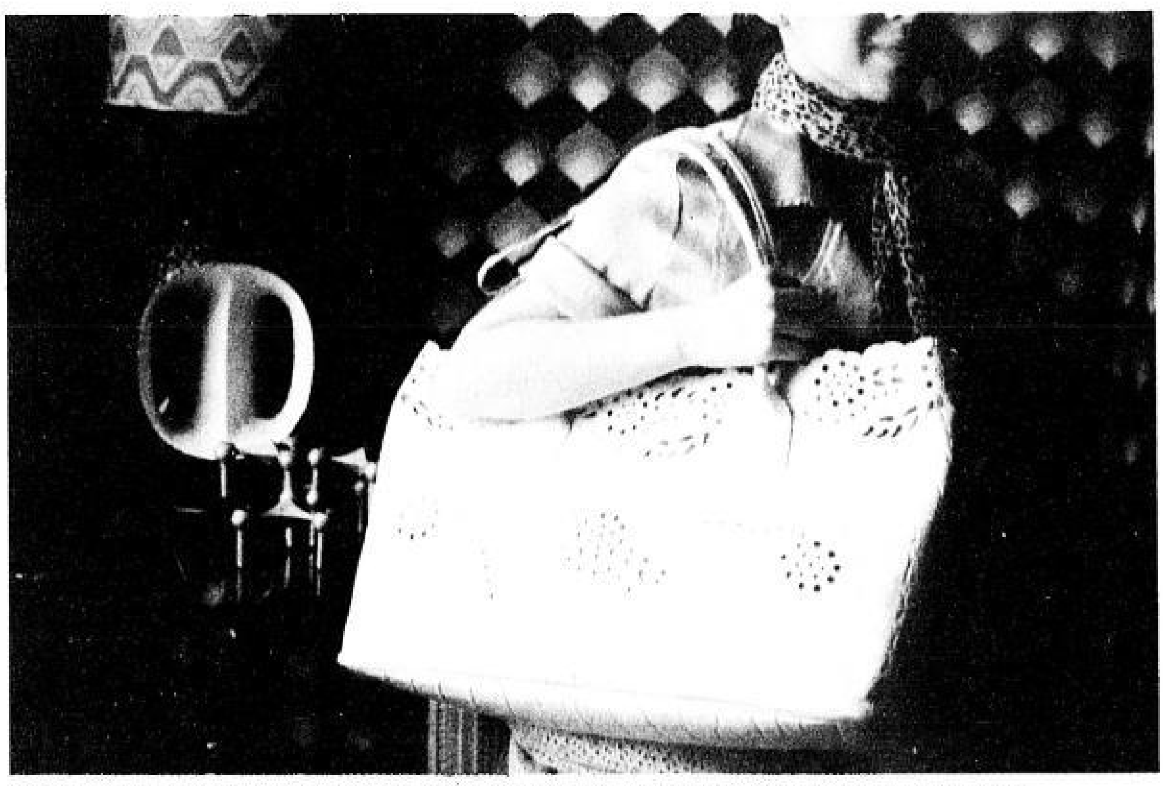
Furla bags also feature carefully designed extras like side pockets for added storage, adjustable side straps and zippers for additional space. Moreover, inside each Furla bag is the signature cotton lining with a zip pocket and cell phone slot.

The best part is that the brand offers more than just bags. Furla has accessories made of resin, brass, glass and corals that take inspiration from nature. They also offer delicate scarves in wild animal prints for the ultimate in urban chic appeal.

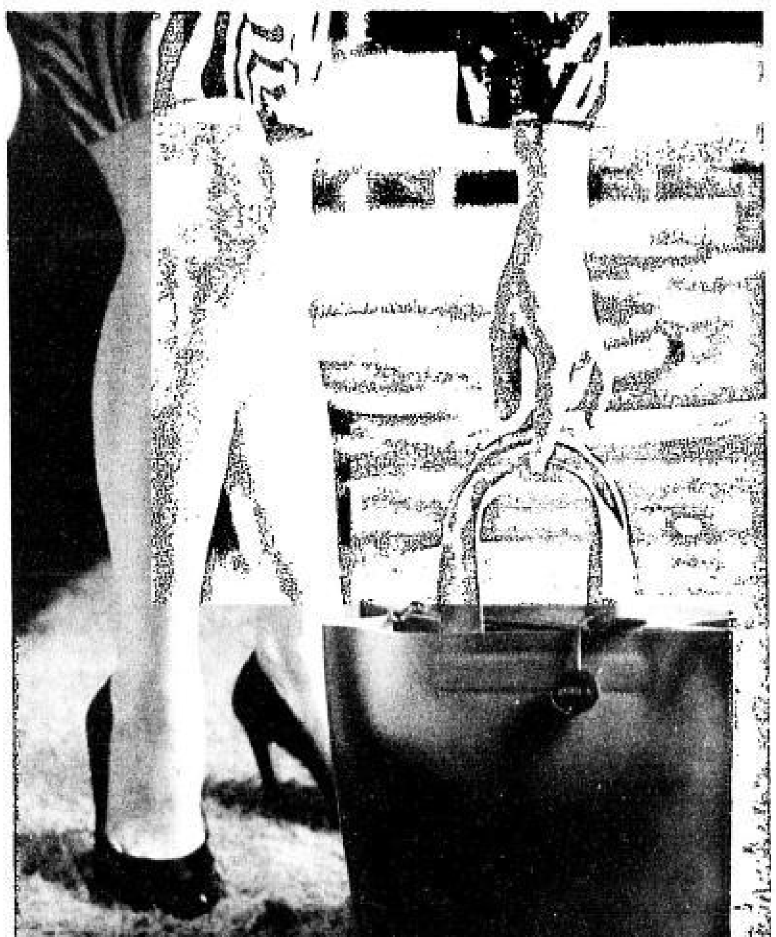
The result of Furla's 2007 collection is freshly appealing, once again proving that style can go hand in hand with substance. So, bag lovers rejoice (I'm sure I'm not the only one)! For your consideration, here are some totes that you might want to add to your ever-growing bag collection.

Furla is exclusively distributed by Stores Specialists Inc. with shops located at Rustan's Makati and Shangri-La Plaza Mall.

E-mail the author at afashion@inquirer.com.ph



HAVANA Shopper bag in white, Furla Farrah scarf in leopard print, DKNY cream eyelet dress



NEW Divided Shopper bag in lime green, Kenneth Cole black pumps

APRIL Shopper bag in cactus, Furla New Desiree dangling earrings

NEW Divided Shopper bag in blush, Furla Havana ring, DKNY beige printed dress

SALLY shoulder bag in cognac, DKNY gold blazer

addicts

Photography Sara Black
Styling Peewee Isidro
Shot on location at Karma Kaufman Retro
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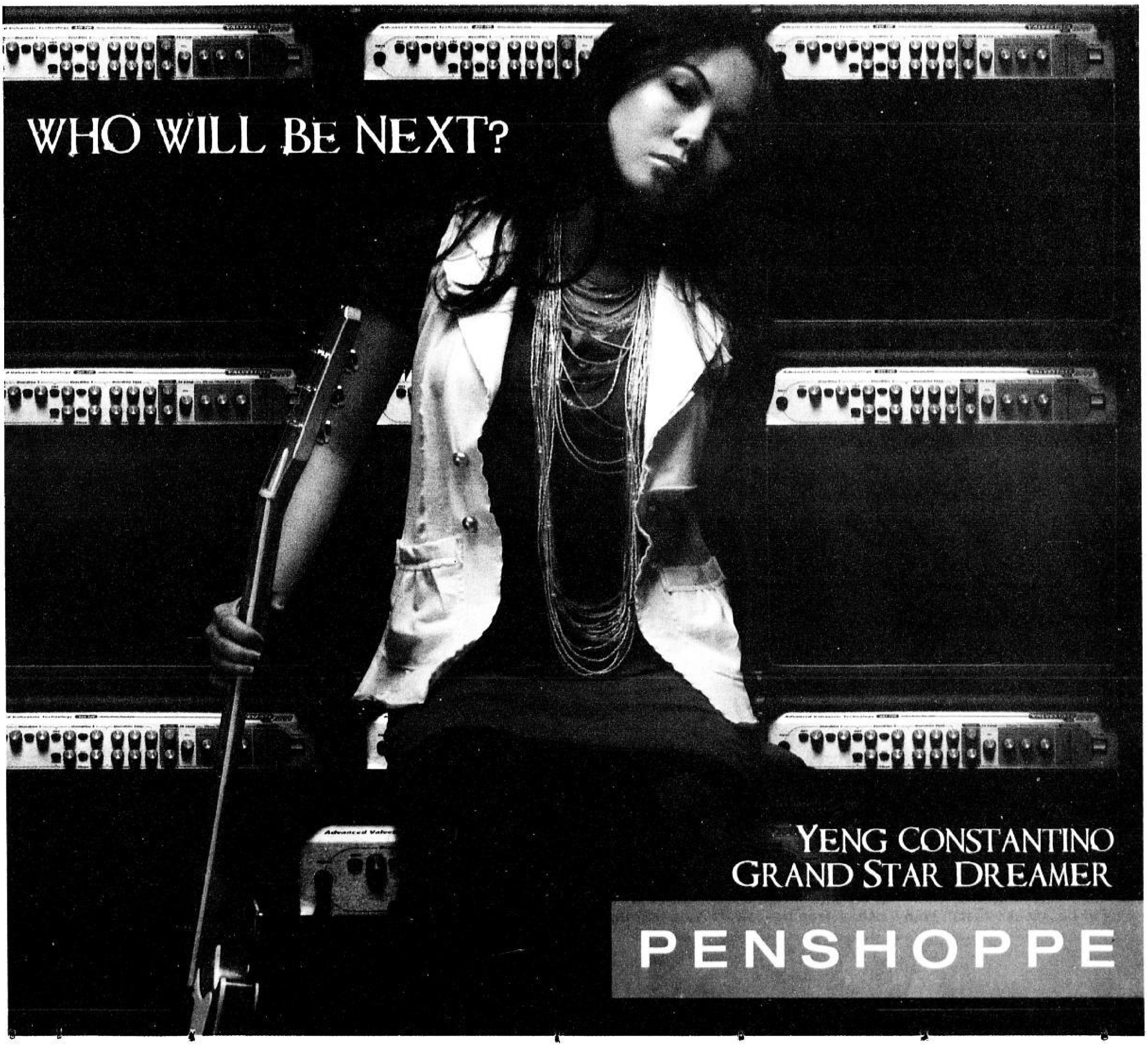
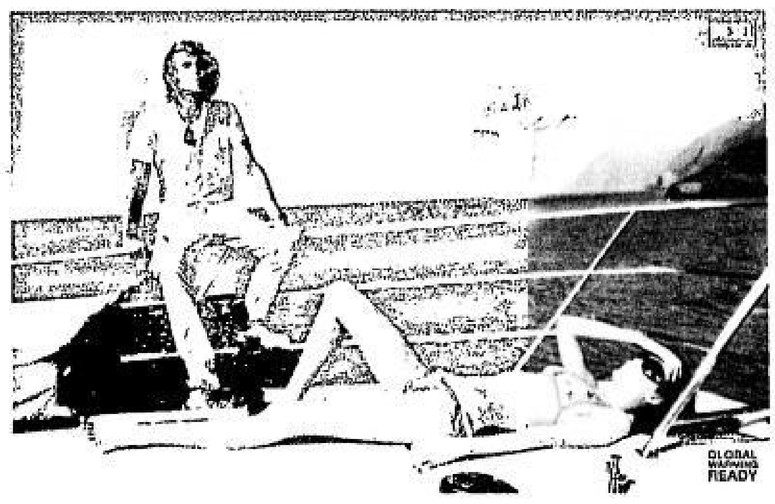

WHO WILL BE NEXT?
YENG CONSTANTINO
GRAND STAR DREAMER
PENSHOPPE

DIESEL
GLOBAL WARMING READY



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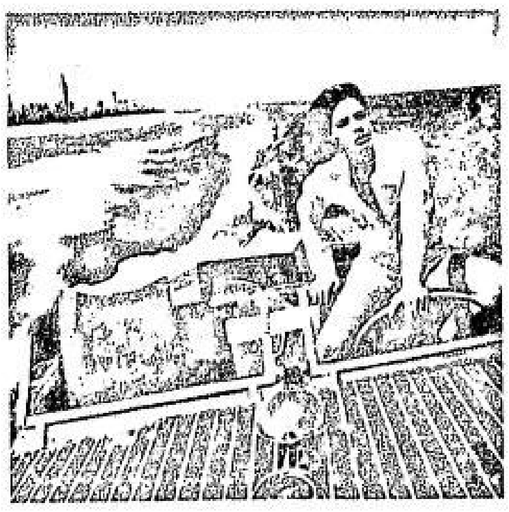
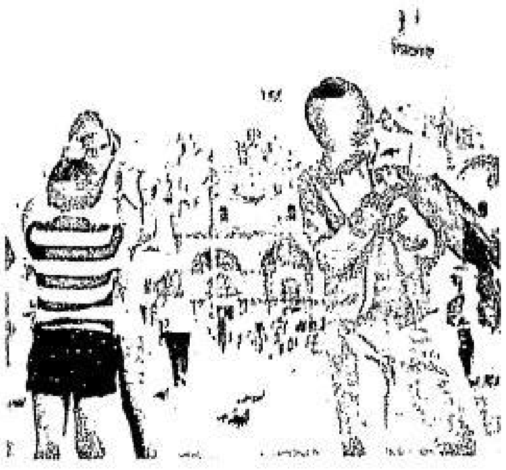
Sounds bad, right? Maybe all this negativity is misplaced and the dramatic calls to action are premature. Diesel doesn't have an answer to all this but in its Spring/Summer 2007 advertising campaign, a series of striking images illustrate an overheated planet of tomorrow where rising temperatures don't interfere much with the everyday business of life. As a matter of fact, all look great and beautiful!

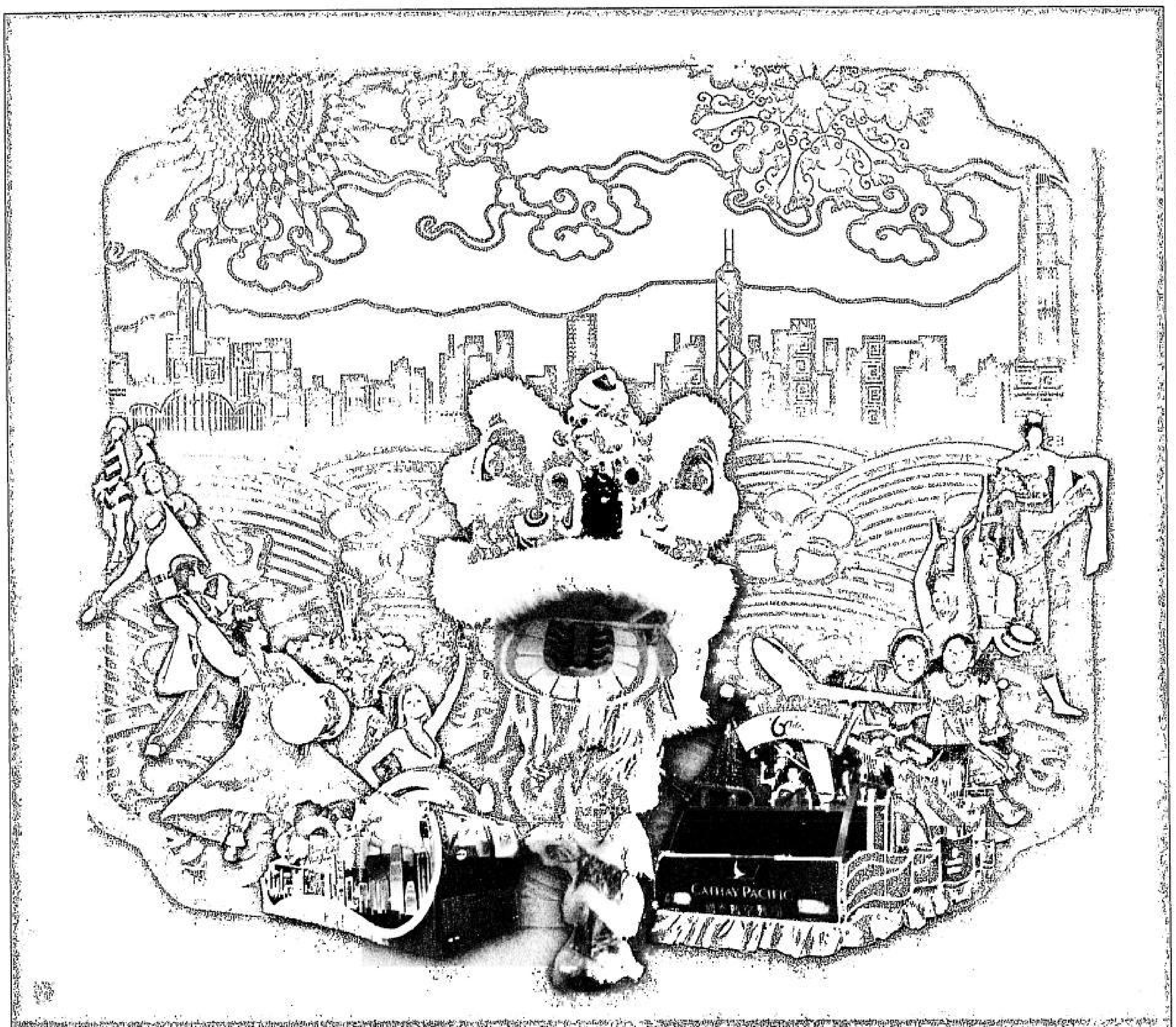
Far from mocking the problem, the campaign touches on the issue of global warming in the brand's typically outrageous style, trying to generate even more heated debates and hopefully a bigger awareness of this problem. After all, one fashion brand can't save the world, but maybe it can make people think twice.

Shot by photographer Terry Richardson with the styling of Eduard Enninful, the campaign was devised by the Diesel Creative Team headed by creative director Wilbert Das, in partnership with Paris agency Gossip.

Diesel is exclusively distributed by Stores Specialists Inc. and is available at Greenbelt 3, Power Plant Mall, Shangri-La Plaza Mall and Robinsons Place Manila.







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And for sports buffs, there's the **Chinese New Year Horseracing** on 20 February and the **International Soccer Tournament*** besides a host of other events.

So catch all the excitement between 12 and 21 February and discover all that Hong Kong has to offer during Chinese New Year!

For more information on Hong Kong, please visit **DiscoverHongKong.com** or contact your local travel agent.

*Information is correct as of January 2007 and it is subject to change without prior notice. Dates to be confirmed.

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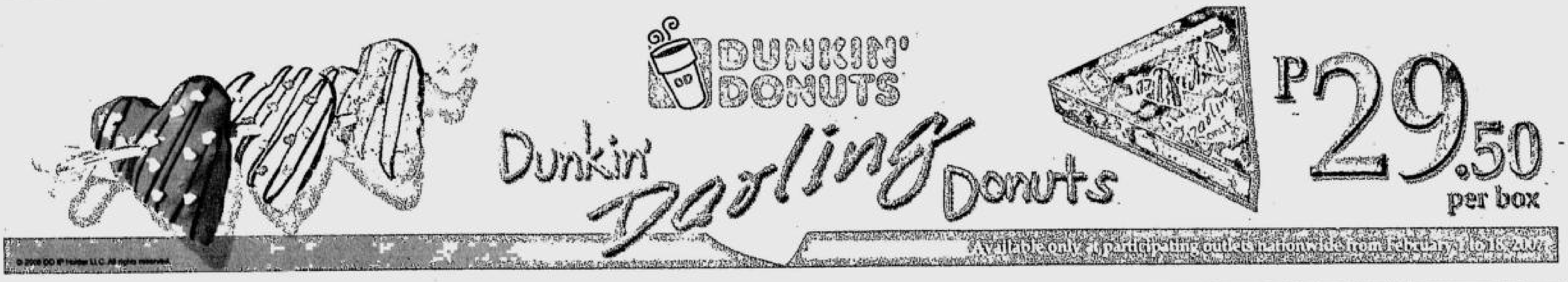
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6 producers at work on Gawad Kalinga film

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

HITTING LOCAL THEATERS NEXT MONTH is "Paraiso: Tatlong Kuwento ng Pag-Asa"—a trilogy that aims to create awareness on the work of Gawad Kalinga, a much-awarded non-governmental organization founded by Antonio Meloto.

Meloto was recently named Filipino of the Year by the INQUIRER, which dubbed the NGO as "Filipinos' gift to the world … [and] a global template for development."

"Paraiso" has Maria Montelibano, Bobby Barreiro and Meloto as executive producers.

The first episode, titled "Umiyak Man ang Langit," is produced by Tony Tuviera and directed by Jun Lana. It stars Maricel Soriano as a survivor in the Leyte landslide and shows how she rebuilt her life with the help of GK volunteers.

The second episode, "Ang Kapatid Kong si Elvis," is produced by Butch Jimenez and directed by Joel Ruiz. It relates the story of GK volunteers who adopted a runaway with an eating disorder called pica (he eats rocks). This segment topbills Michael V, Carmi Martin and Maricel Laxa.

The third segment, "Marie," is produced by Tony Gloria and directed by Ricky Davao. Gloria says it recounts the "inspiring" story of Fil-Am Rudy Abad (played by Cesar Montano), whose American wife wished to help the poor in the Philippines. The wife perished in 9-11.

Jimenez, head of Retail Business Group of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., says he was convinced to join this project "due to [GK's] vision of not only building houses but rebuilding lives."

Gloria says that the film is being subtitled for release abroad.

A March release in local theaters is being eyed by the producers.

Jimenez commends the film's stars "for giving their time and talents without asking for anything in return." Which is apropos, he

GAWAD/ F3

INSIDE

- Travolta in a female role /F6
- At home with singer JayR, 2 housemates & 11 dogs /G4

Gladys: I left for health reasons and that's that

By Nini Valera

COMEDIAN GLADYS GUEVARRA cried at her press conference on Monday night after being pressed for the reason that she quit the noontime show "Eat Bulaga."

The press con was held to launch "Magic Kamison," Guevarra's first television series to be aired on GMA 7, which also airs "Eat Bulaga."

Guevarra said she had resigned "for health reasons," as she was undergoing therapy for scoliosis and a disc bulge.

But tabloid reports attributed her flight to a supposed dalliance with Janno Gibbs, one of "Eat Bulaga's" hosts.

When Guevarra started to cry, the press con was halted. When it was resumed, Guevarra explained that she got scared during the intense questioning.

"I have a legitimate reason for quitting," she said. "Why can't it be left at

GLADYS/ F3

GLADYS GUEVARRA

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CHEER FACTOR

Police, Sting to reunite for Grammys

NEW YORK—THE Police will reunite to perform at this year's Grammys ceremony, the Recording Academy announced Tuesday.

The award-winning group (five Grammys) will open the event 23 years after breaking up amid internal conflict.

Singer Sting, drummer Stewart Copeland and guitarist Andy Summers last performed together in 2003 when they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Sting fanned speculation of a Police reunion and tour when he told the Television Critics Association earlier this month he and his former band mates were "talking about" doing something to commemorate their 30th anniversary.

CBS will air the 49th annual Grammy Awards ceremony live from Los Angeles on Feb. 11. *AP*

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BABEL PG13 1:40,4:30,7:20,10:10	DÉJÀ VU PG13 1:15,4:00,6:45,9:30	APOCALYPTO R18 1:55,4:40,7:35,10:30

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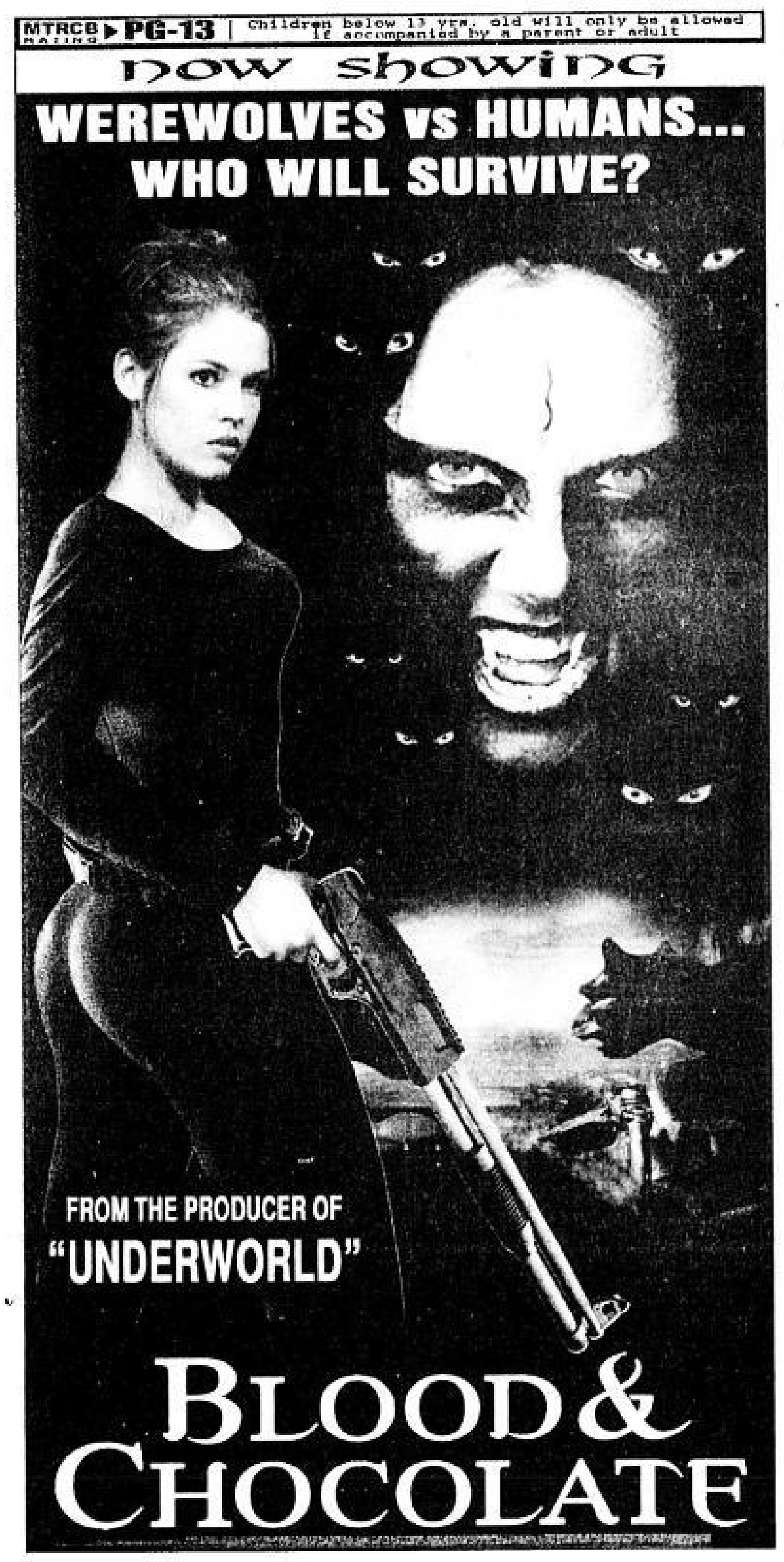

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Oscar seen as a curse on some winners

RUSHES

LOS ANGELES—IT'S AWARDS season in Hollywood, with all red carpets leading to the Oscars. But winning that prestigious award can sometimes lead to nothing more than bad roles and even oblivion.

"It's known as the curse of the Oscar ... the actor's ultimate dream can turn out to be the ultimate nightmare," said movie pundit Tom O'Neil, awards columnist for the Web site The Envelope (http://theenvelope.latimes.com/).

Winners like F. Murray Abraham, Brenda Fricker, Linda Hunt, Marlee Matlin and Louise Fletcher are hardly household names despite earning the film world's most coveted award. Other better-known Oscar winners, like Gwyneth Paltrow and Richard Dreyfuss, have complained that winning the award brought them personal and career troubles.

GWYNETH Paltrow (left) and Halle Berry

O'Neil noted that the Oscar made Paltrow almost too expensive to hire at age 26, while Dreyfuss spiraled downward for a while with a high-profile drug habit and a string of flops after his Oscar win for his role in "The Goodbye Girl" in 1977.

Louise Fletcher, who picked up the Best Actress award for her role as the inflexible Nurse Ratched in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," said of winning the Oscar, "It'll make you wonderfully happy for a night. But don't expect that it'll do anything for your career."

O'Neil said the list includes Rita Moreno, who won for "West Side Story," Halle Berry, Dianne Wiest and Cuba Gooding Jr., who have all struggled to recapture glory after winning an Oscar. *Reuters*

Tyra Banks fat?

NEW YORK—TYRA BANKS, who has gained weight since her days strutting the catwalk, says she was upset when unflattering photos showing her in a one-piece bathing suit were mocked on the Internet.

"It was such a strange meanness and rejoicing that people had when thinking that was what my body looked like. It was really hurtful to me," the 33-year-old talk show host says in an interview in the Feb. 5 issue of People magazine.

The photos show Banks on a beach during a recent trip to Sydney, Australia. They had popped up earlier this month on a celebrity gossip Web site with the not-so-nice headline: "Tyra Banks is Fat."

Banks, who hosts the syndicated "The Tyra Banks Show" and the CW network's "America's Next Top Model," tells the magazine she weighs 161 lbs and has fluctuated from 148 lbs to 162 lbs, since retiring from modeling in 2005. *AP*

Julie Delpy, director

BERLIN—THE 57TH BERLINALE will screen movies directed by actors Antonio Banderas, Steve Buscemi and Julie Delpy and see stars like Isabella Rossellini add glamour to the film festival, organizers said this week.

French actress Delpy, who won audiences' hearts with her romantic turn alongside Ethan Hawke in "Before Sunset" and its sequel "Before Sunrise" nine years later, is showing her directorial debut.

Playing true to type, Delpy, who co-wrote the script for "Before Sunrise" with Hawke, has delivered a romantic comedy entitled "Deux Jours (Two Days in Paris)."

Spanish heartthrob Banderas is giving directing another try in his mother tongue, with "El Camino de los Ingleses (Summer Rain)" features acclaimed Spanish actress Victoria Abril, with whom he starred in Pedro Almodovar's "Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down," and Alberto Amarilla.

Steve Buscemi's "Interview 83" features English starlet Sienna Miller in a remake of a film by slain Dutch director Theo Van Gogh about a charged encounter between a political journalist and a famous actress.

JANET Jackson (left) with Tyra Banks AP

The event kicks off on Feb. 8 and runs through till Feb. 18 with 22 films competing for the prestigious Golden Bear. *AFP*

ANNETTE BENING

Annette for arts

SACRAMENTO—ACtress Annette Bening hopes Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's new bipartisan approach will result in more state funding for the arts.

Bening, a longtime Democrat and member of the California Arts Council, told delegates at the council's annual meeting Tuesday that she is encouraged by the Republican governor's willingness to cooperate on issues such as health care and the environment.

"We are the folks in the corner who are quietly raising our hand, suggesting that we also need some attention and we also need some funding," Bening said. "And the thing about us is, we don't need a lot. We can do so much with so little." *AP*

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① BABEL
MTRCB: PG-13
② CHARLOTTE'S WEB
MTRCB: GP
2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:10
③ APOCALYPTO
MTRCB: R-18
1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00
④ NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
MTRCB: GP
2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00
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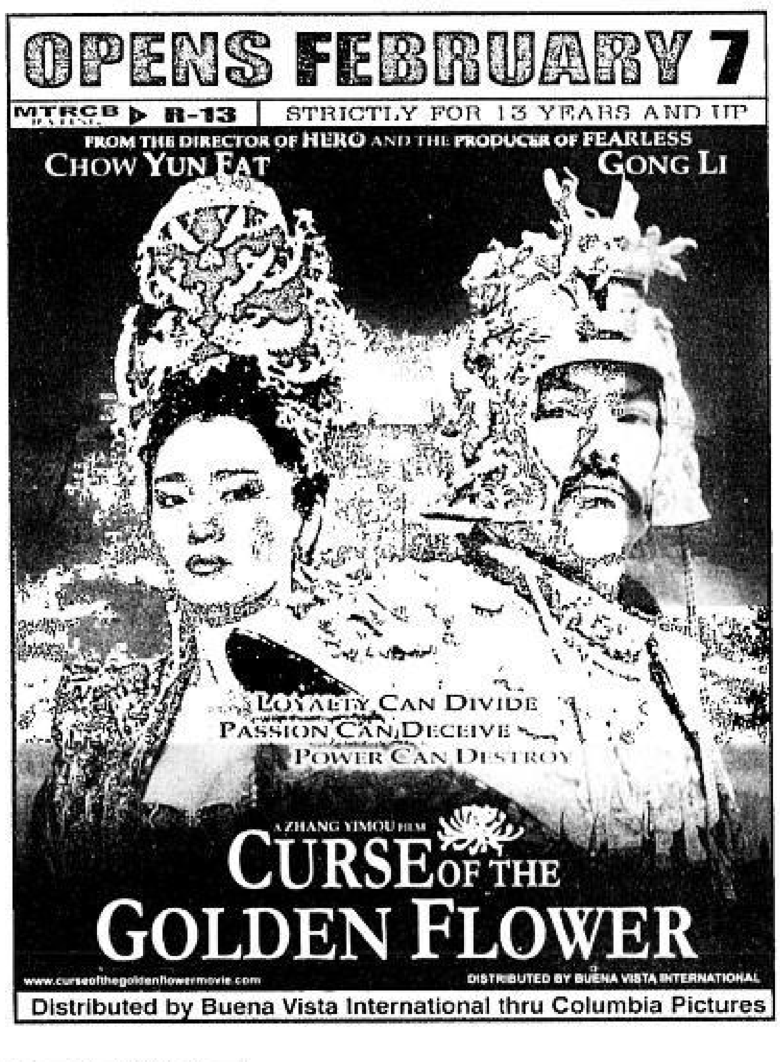

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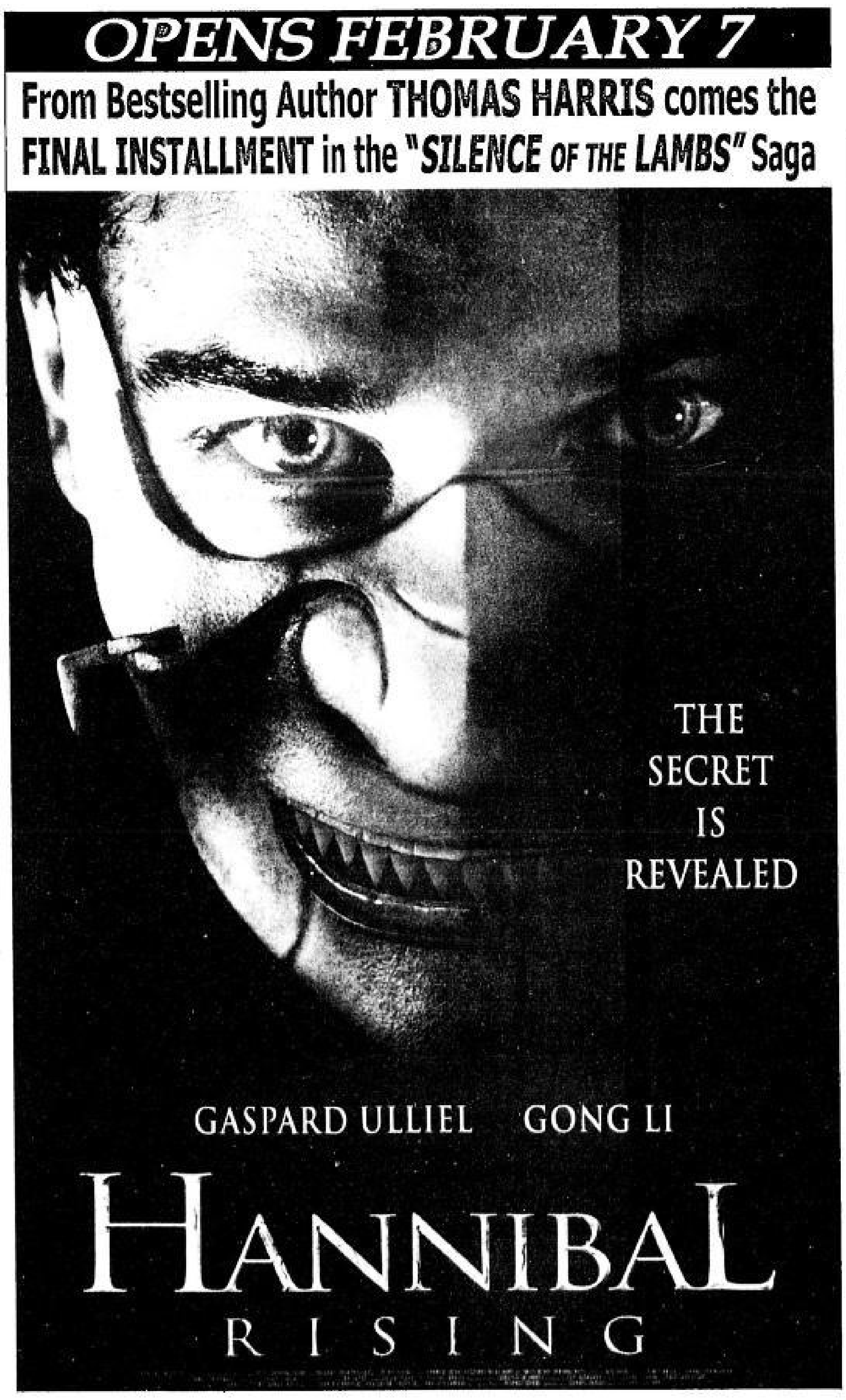

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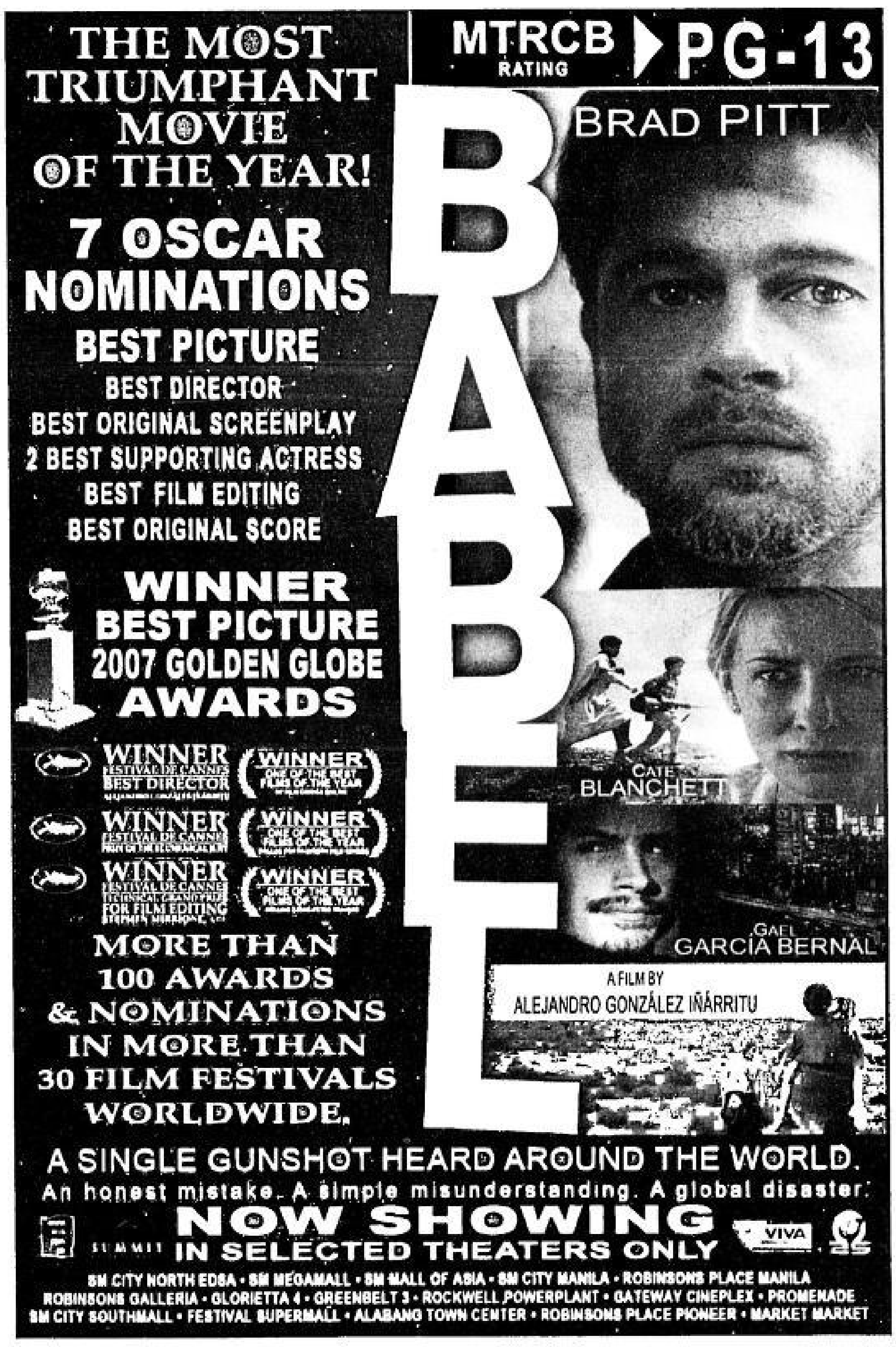

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Gladys: I left for health reasons . . .

From page F1

that?"

Guevarra told INQUIRER Entertainment that she and Gibbs were just friends.

She admitted that she sometimes regrets her decision to quit the show. "A lot of people would grab the chance to be ... on the show, and I just [left]," she said.

But the lead role in "Magic Kamison" is one opportunity that she would not pass up. "This is ... the best birthday gift I have received," said Guevarra, who turns 30 on Feb. 11.

The title of the series was drawn from an urban legend propagated by movie producer Lily Monteverde, that a piece of garment she had worn on her honeymoon with husband Remy Monteverde brought luck to her movie productions. She had asked her female leads like Alma Moreno and Dina Bonnevie to wear the *kamison* in their movies.

Wilma Galvante, network senior vice president for Entertainment TV, said Monteverde would be credited in the series for the concept.

PG-13
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Gawad Kalinga movie

From page F1

notes, because "it is about [the fact that] no matter how small our contribution, we can [make] a difference in the lives of our countrymen."

He asserts, "The [film's] unifying theme is the heroism in every Filipino which drives the hope that we can rise from poverty. [Those who] doubt that ordinary people can be extraordinary heroes should watch this film."

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Set in the minefields of modern suburbia, this film follows several inhabitants of a small American town as they fumble their way through adulthood. Numb-to-life housewife and mother Sarah Pierce (Kate Winslet) finds an outlet for her yearning in gorgeous househusband Brad Adamson (Patrick Wilson), who is crippled with insecurity over the fact that his perfect wife, Kathy (Jennifer Connely) is the family breadwinner.

When Sarah and Brad meet at the local playground one afternoon, a passionate affair is sparked. In a further attempt to reclaim his youthful fire, Brad joins a night football league with Larry Hedges (Noah Emmerich), a former cop who has begun to harass a convicted sex offender, Ronnie J. McGorvey (Jackie Earle Haley). The trouble lives eventually collide, causing each individual to take full responsibility for their not-so-responsible actions. It is bitingly funny and nakedly honest critique of middle class dysfunction.

For Screening Schedule, please contact our Cinema Access: 635-5555 or visit us: www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

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BEST PICTURE
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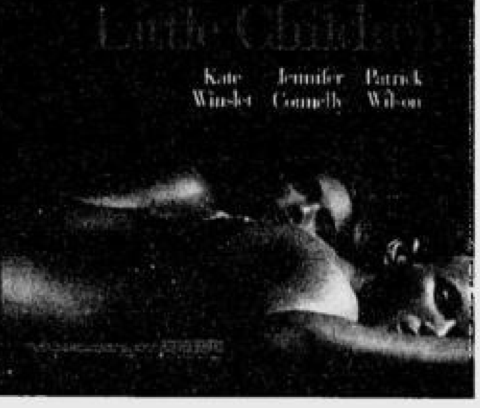
Kate Winslet Jennifer Connelly Patrick Wilson



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BABEL 12:20 / 3:20 / 6:20 / 9:20	CHARLOTTE'S WEB 12:00 / 2:20 / 4:40 / 7:00 / 9:20	BLOOD & CHOCOLATE 12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 9:50	
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 11:50 / 2:20 / 4:50 / 7:20 / 9:50	AGENT X-44 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	SAW 3 1:10 / 3:20 / 5:30 / 7:40 / 9:50	APOCALYPTO 12:00 / 3:00 / 6:00 / 9:00

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1 BLOOD & CHOCOLATE 12:05 R3 / 1:40 / 3:55 / 6:10 / 8:25	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 1:00 / 3:30 / 6:00 / 8:30	3 APOCALYPTO 12:10 R5 / 1:50 / 4:50 / 7:50
4 LITTLE CHILDREN 12:30 / 3:00 / 5:30 / 8:00	5 AGENT X-44 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 CHARLOTTE'S WEB	2 BABEL	3 THX APOCALYPTO GUARANTEED SEATS	
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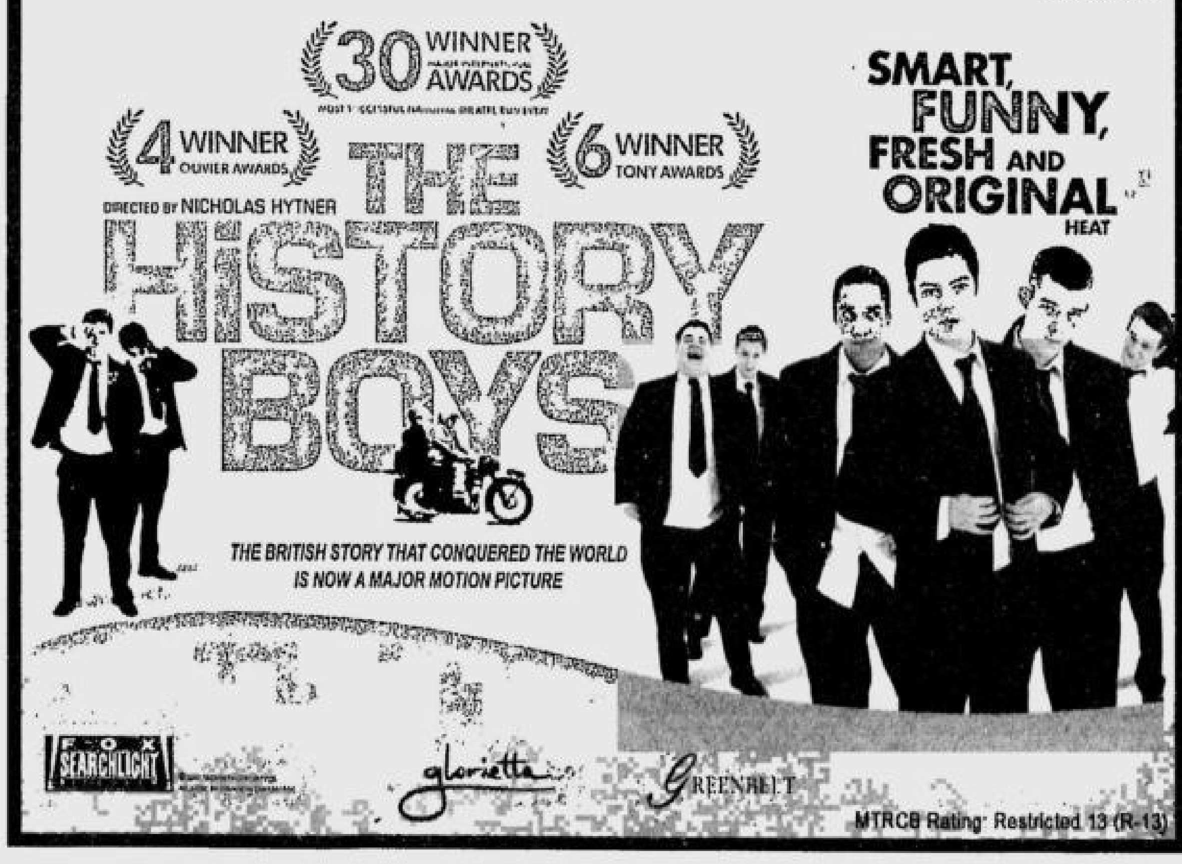

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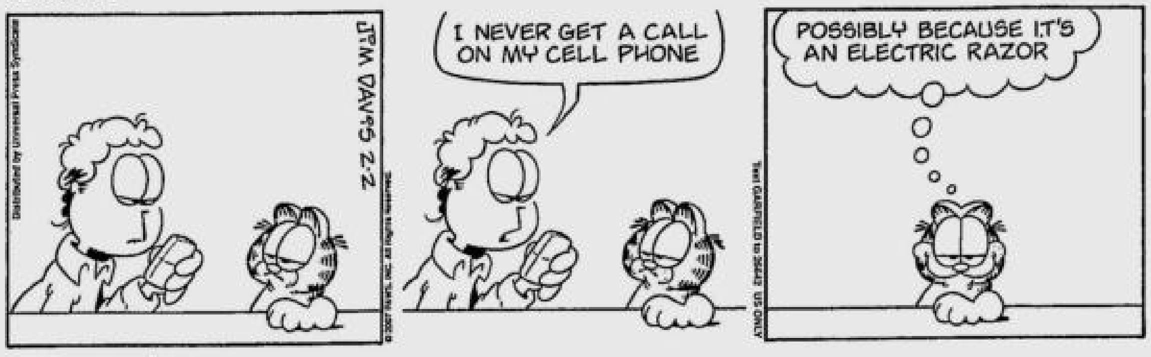
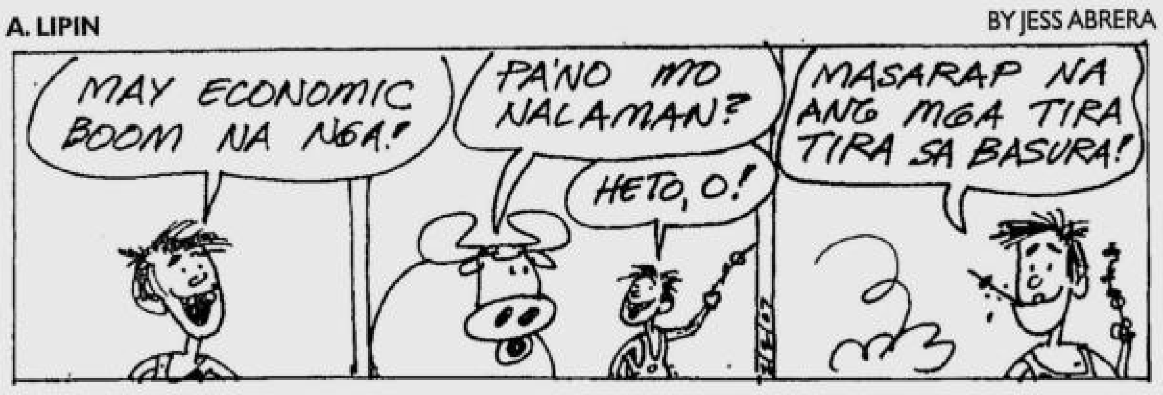
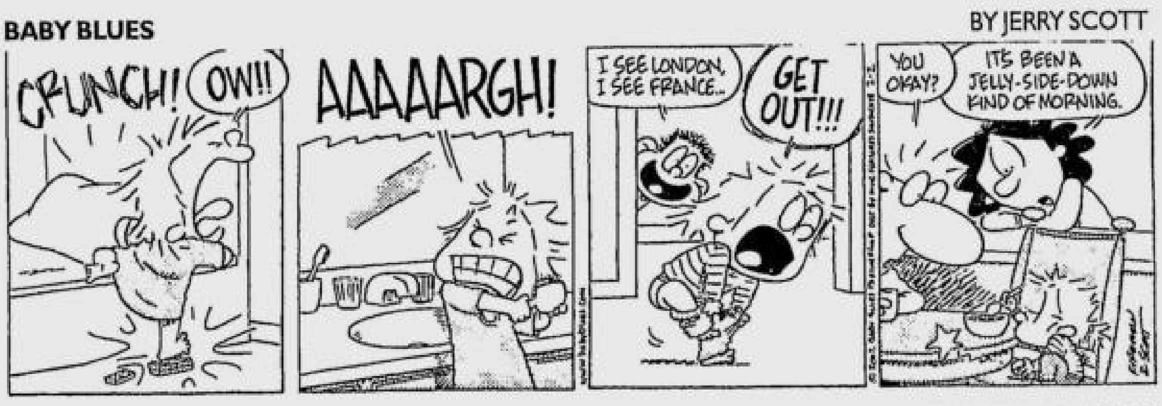
GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS


JIM DAVIS 2-2
I NEVER GET A CALL ON MY CELL PHONE
POSSIBLY BECAUSE IT'S AN ELECTRIC RAZOR

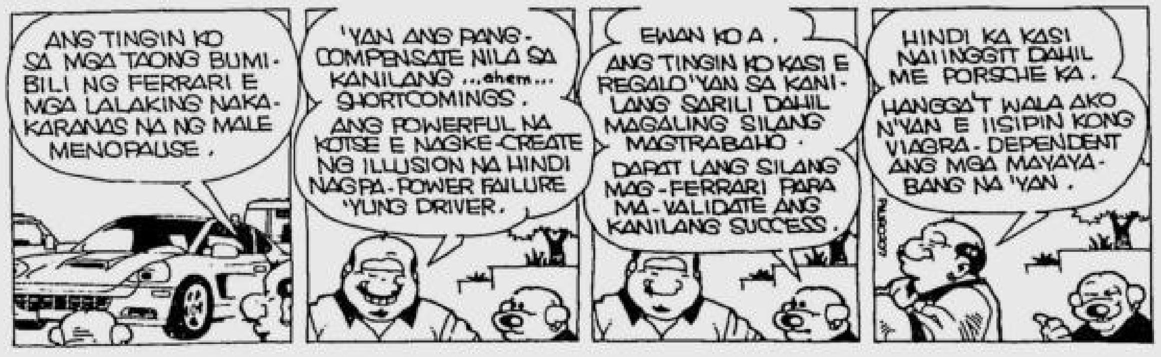
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


MAY ECONOMIC BOOM NA NGA!
PA'NO MO NALAMAN?
HETO, O!
MASARAP NA ANG MGA TIRA TIRA SA BASURA!

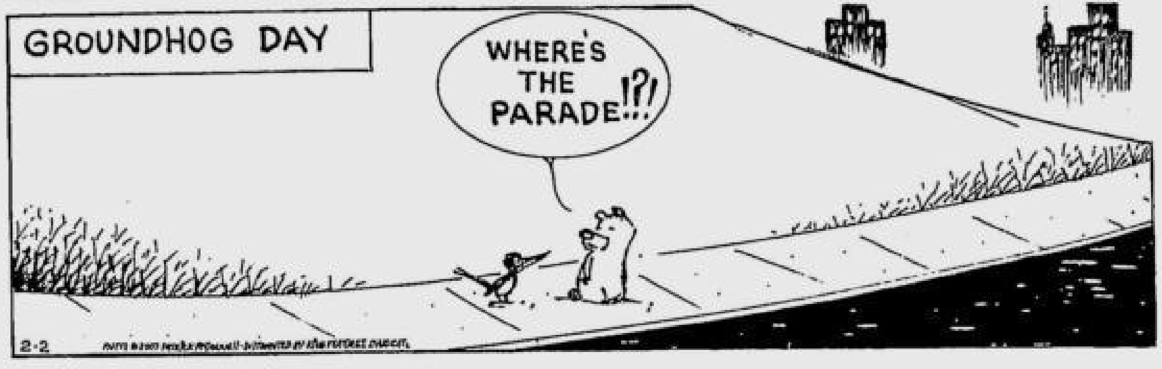
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


CRUNCH!
OW!!
AAAAARGH!
I SEE LONDON, I SEE FRANCE...
GET OUT!!!
YOU OKAY?
IT'S BEEN A JELLY-SIDE-DOWN KIND OF MORNING.

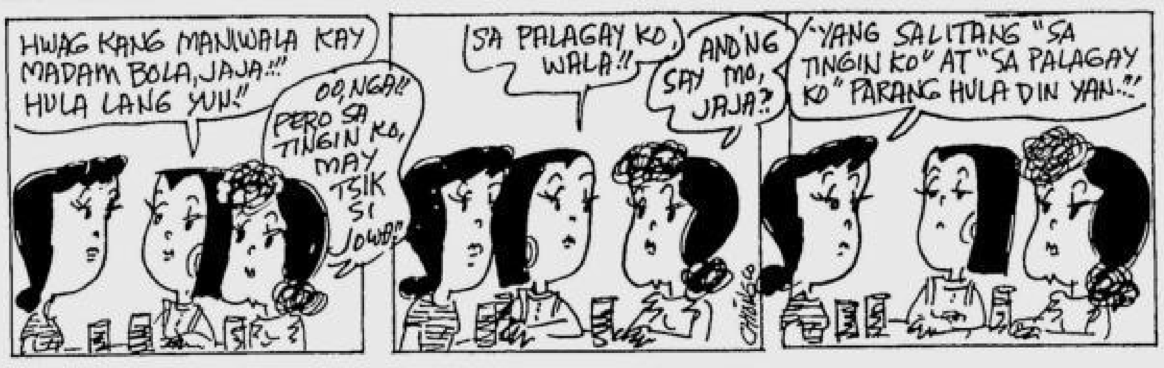
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANG TINGIN KO SA MGA TAONG BUMIBILI NG FERRARI E MGA LALAKING NAKAKARANAS NA NG MALE MENOPAUSE.
'YAN ANG PANG-COMPENSATE NILA SA KANILANG ...ahem... SHORTCOMINGS. ANG POWERFUL NA KOTSE E NAGKE-CREATE NG ILLUSION NA HINDI NAGPA-POWER FAILURE 'YUNG DRIVER.
EWAN KO A. ANG TINGIN KO KASI E REGALO 'YAN SA KANILANG SARILI DAHIL MAGALING SILANG MAGTRABAHO. DAPAT LANG SILANG MAG-FERRARI PARA MA-VALIDATE ANG KANILANG SUCCESS.
HINDI KA KASI NAIINGGIT DAHIL ME PORSCHE KA. HANGGA'T WALA AKO N'YAN E IISIPIN KONG VIAGRA-DEPENDENT ANG MGA MAYAYABANG NA 'YAN.

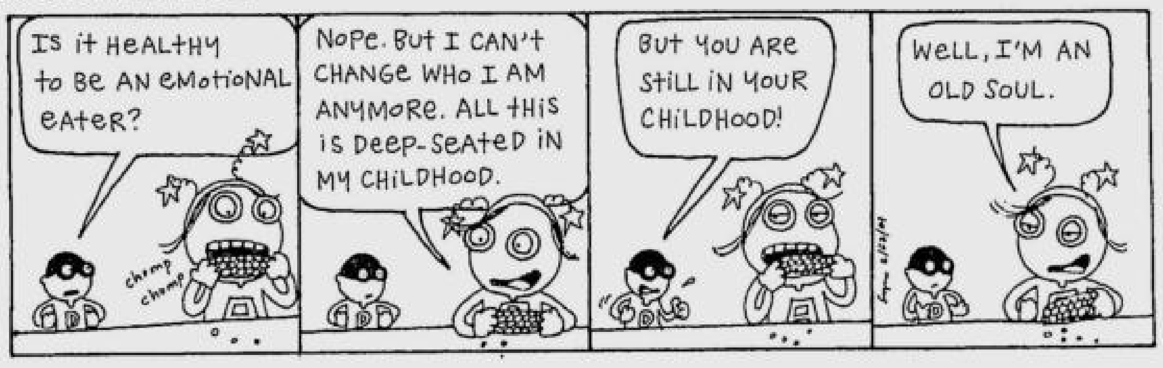
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


GROUNDHOG DAY
WHERE'S THE PARADE!?!
2-2

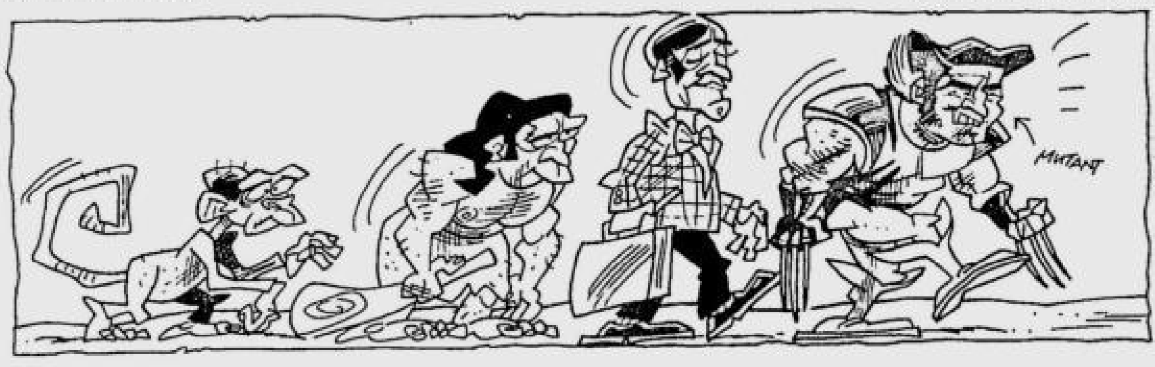
LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HWAG KANG MANIWALA KAY MADAM BOLA, JAJA!!! HULA LANG YUN!!
OO, NGA!! PERO SA TINGIN KO, MAY TSIK SI JOWA!!
SA PALAGAY KO, WALA!!
AND'NG SAY MO, JAJA?
"YANG SALITANG "SA TINGIN KO" AT "SA PALAGAY KO" PARANG HULA DIN YAN..!!
CHIONGLO

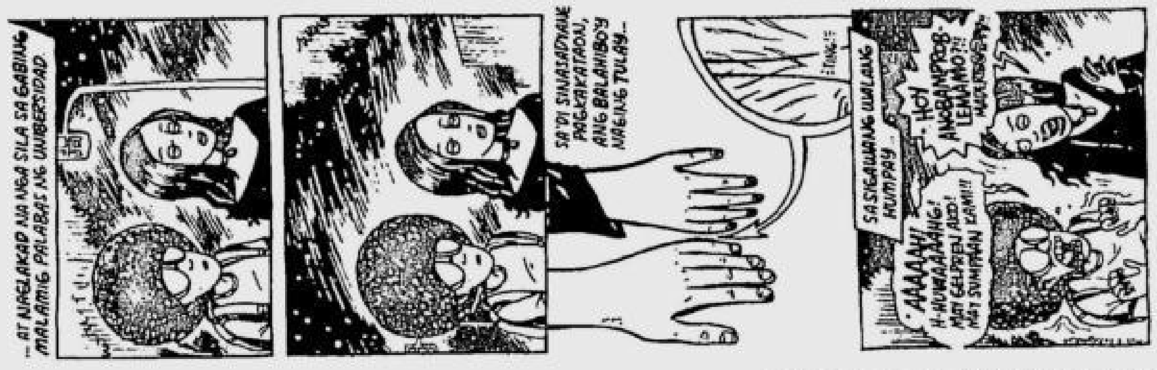
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


IS IT HEALTHY TO BE AN EMOTIONAL EATER?
chomp chomp
NOPE. BUT I CAN'T CHANGE WHO I AM ANYMORE. ALL THIS IS DEEP-SEATED IN MY CHILDHOOD.
BUT YOU ARE STILL IN YOUR CHILDHOOD!
WELL, I'M AN OLD SOUL.

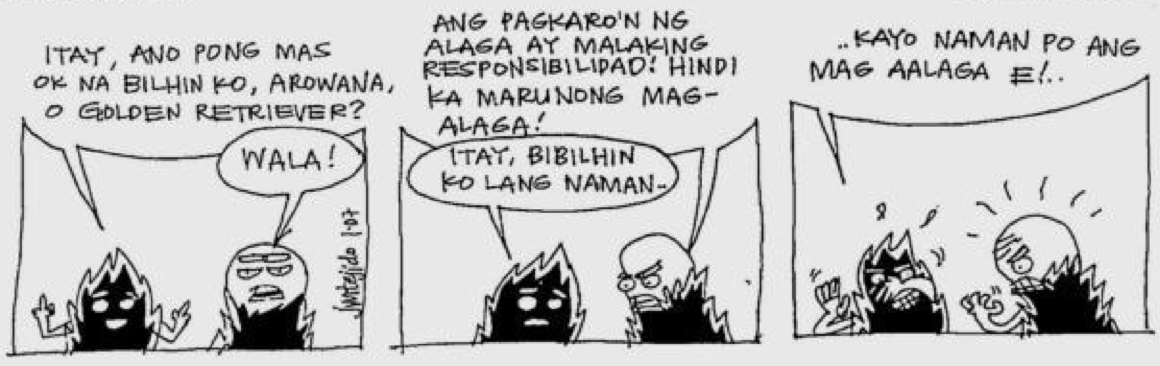
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS



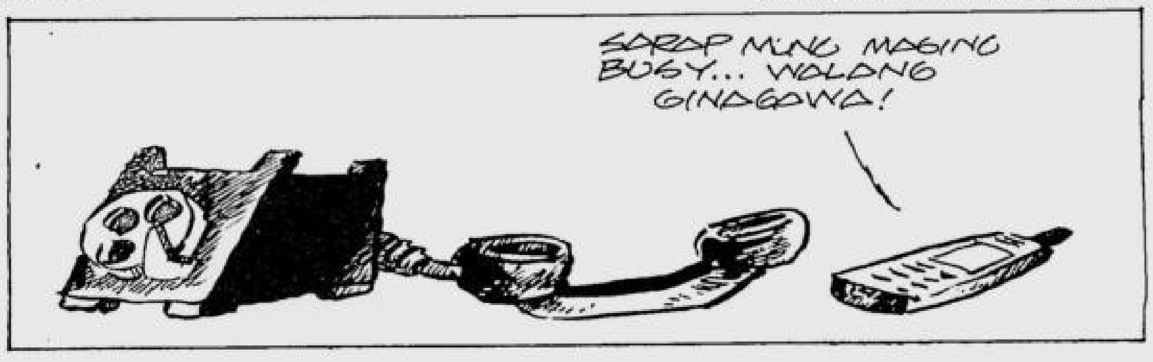
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


...AT NAGLAKAD NA NGA SILA SA GABING MALAMIG PALABAS NG UNIBERSIDAD
SA 'DI SINASADYANG PAGKAKATAON, ANG BALAHIBO'Y NAGING TULAY...
TING!!
SASIGAWANG WALANG HUMPAY...
AAAAAH! H-HUWAAAAAG! MAY GELPREN AKO! MAY SUMPAAN KAMI!!
HOY! ANONG PROBLEMA MO?!

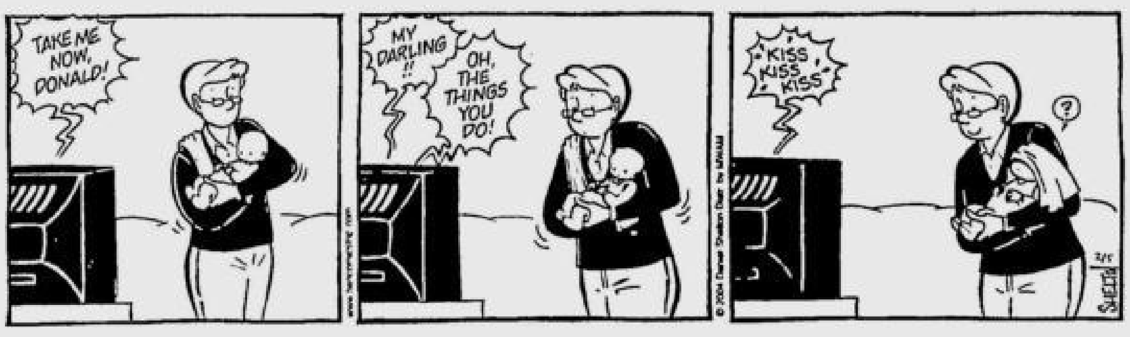
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ITAY, ANO PONG MAS OK NA BILHIN KO, AROWANA, O GOLDEN RETRIEVER?
WALA!
ANG PAGKARO'N NG ALAGA AY MALAKING RESPONSIBILIDAD! HINDI KA MARUNONG MAG-ALAGA!
ITAY, BIBILHIN KO LANG NAMAN..
..KAYO NAMAN PO ANG MAG AALAGA E!..

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SARAP MING MAGING BUSY... WALANG GINAGAWA!

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


TAKE ME NOW, DONALD!
MY DARLING!!
OH, THE THINGS YOU DO!
KISS, KISS, KISS
?

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Pack down
5 Cosby series
9 Curved
14 Ope[illegible]ng
15 "__ the Explorer"
16 Former Indian leader
17 So long, gonna look at a tree?
19 Spry
20 Old card game
21 Rights grp.
22 Road divisions
23 Ravel ballet, "La __"
24 Writer Emile
25 Language quirks
28 Pedantic one
30 Sheepish comment
33 Totaled
34 Stupefy
35 Mail
36 Practical trainees
38 Unequal-sided triangle
40 Fr. holy women
41 Something to scratch
43 Outspoken
44 "I Saw __ Again Last Night"
45 Too
46 "Frasier" character
47 Nat or Natalie
49 German river
51 Shampoo brand
53 Winter coating
54 Friend of Pierre
57 Murphy of old films
58 Lapin tree?
60 Vernacular
61 Actress Jessica
62 Hindu garment
63 Succinct
64 Old pol. letters
65 Bauxite and galena

DOWN
1 Pig end
2 Guthrie's son
3 Actor O'Shea
4 Pops
5 Highest standards
6 Legumes with oily seeds
7 Principle of conduct
8 Bawl
9 Computer type
10 Imperial
11 TV series tree?
12 Perry's creator
13 Membership fees
18 Beguile
23 Yeas and nays
24 Metallic element
25 Stew type
26 Poet Alighieri
27 Arbitrator in a tree?
29 Big time for frats
31 Kofi of the U.N.
32 Astaire's sister
34 Mach toppers
35 Gradient
37 Egyptian river
39 Lemmon movie
42 OK, and others
45 Assert without proof
46 Punish a lawyer
48 Ken and Lena
50 College of the Southwest city
51 Beyond
52 Govern
53 German wife
54 At a distance
55 Deep, slimy soil
56 Novelist Murdoch
59 Chicken-loving general

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	8	■	9	10	11	12	13
14				■	15				■	16				
17				18					■	19				
20			■	21					■	22				
■	■	■	23					■	24				■	■
25	26	27				■	28	29			■	30	31	32
33					■	34				■	35			
36					37		■	38		39				
40				■	41		42		■	43				
44			■	45				■	46					
■	■	47	48			■	49	50				■	■	■
51	52				■	53					■	54	55	56
57					■	58					59			
60					■	61				■	62			
63					■	64				■	65			

By Robert H. Wolfe
North Woodmere, NY
2/2/07

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

S	K	I	N	■	L	E	S	S	■	T	B	S	P	S
A	N	N	E	■	A	X	L	E	■	A	L	C	O	A
H	I	H	O	■	D	I	E	T	■	S	O	A	P	Y
I	F	O	N	E	I	S	W	H	A	T	O	N	E	■
B	E	T	■	G	E	T	■	■	O	E	D	■	■	■
■	■	W	A	R	S	■	M	A	R	S	■	S	E	R
B	L	A	S	E	■	D	I	R	T	■	A	P	S	E
E	A	T	S	T	H	E	N	I	A	M	F	A	S	T
A	M	E	N	■	I	N	C	A	■	A	R	C	E	D
M	A	R	■	S	T	Y	E	■	O	T	O	E	■	■
■	■	■	F	L	U	■	■	E	R	E	■	C	A	B
■	C	H	E	A	P	A	N	D	G	R	E	A	S	Y
M	O	U	N	T	■	S	O	D	A	■	A	D	I	N
O	U	N	C	E	■	I	M	I	N	■	R	E	D	O
O	P	T	E	D	■	S	E	E	S	■	S	T	E	W

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2/2/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: Without question, you're original and unique. You do things your own way. You're also very sophisticated and hip to the scene. You have a driving, youthful energy. You often become totally absorbed in your work. You appreciate fashion and culture, but you're not a slave to it. This year you will study and learn something very important to you. **Birthdate of:** Christie Brinkley, supermodel; Liz Smith, gossip columnist; Graham Nash, musician/photographer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Refrain from being critical of children and others who are close to you. Remember Goethe: "Correction does much, but encouragement does more."

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Because of confusion dealing with parents and bosses, you might feel bummed out about your personal life. But this is just a passing trick with the Moon! It comes and goes very quickly.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Heed that classic advice today that says, "If you can't say something nice about someone, don't say anything at all." If you follow this, you'll have no regrets.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Money concerns are actually confusing. You don't have all the facts. Do nothing today, because to some degree, you're working in the dark. Wait until tomorrow.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): For some reason, you feel full of self-doubt today, and this spirals into wanting to avoid others because you feel less attractive. This is all illusion! (Neptune.) You're as wonderful as you were last week.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Because Neptune and Saturn are dancing with the Moon today, many people feel anxious or full of self-doubt. It's a depressing combination. But it's gone immediately! Relax.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Don't worry if a friend seems critical of you, or vice versa. This is just a temporary misunderstanding. Let it go. Don't make a big deal out of anything. Don't even try to fix it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Misunderstandings with parents and bosses could arise easily today. That's because the Moon and Saturn are involved, and we hear everything as a criticism. Let it pass.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might doubt your knowledge about something. Someone could make you feel ignorant or uneducated. Don't take the bait, and don't be depressed. This feeling is gone by tomorrow. Phfft!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You value your security. This is why it's easy for you to be concerned about money and possessions, especially for the future, and especially if you share them with others. That's OK.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Be patient with partners today. Pessimism is rampant, and this leads to misunderstandings with others. Cool your jets.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): If someone criticizes your work today, don't take this to heart. Everyone is critical and full of self-doubt today. People will lash out.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

	4	9						5
				4	9			3
								6
					3	5		
		1	2		4	9		
		6	1					
2								
3			8	6				
4						7	1	

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 2/02

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

6	3	5	2	1	4	8	9	7
8	2	1	9	7	6	3	5	4
7	4	9	3	5	8	6	2	1
9	1	8	5	2	7	4	3	6
4	5	2	8	6	3	1	7	9
3	6	7	4	9	1	2	8	5
2	7	4	6	8	9	5	1	3
5	9	3	1	4	2	7	6	8
1	8	6	7	3	5	9	4	2

Difficulty Level ★★★

Disconcerting moments on TV

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Where do these interesting creatures come from? What have they done to deserve a program on TV?

TELEVIEWERS, UNITE! WE deserve good and responsible TV, so if we don't get it, let's complain. Clear. Let's start off by citing these recent disconcerting moments on television:

Last Tuesday, Jan. 23 on "Starstruck," a number of teen contestants *tried* to sing duets with **Regine Velasquez** (for the boys) and **Ogie Alcasid** (for the girls)—and *all* of them bombed in a big way.

Their voices went this way and that, they couldn't catch their breath because they were so nervous, and the duets were painful to listen to, despite Regine and Ogie's best efforts to save the songs their young partners mangled.

In the first place, whose bright idea was it to get exceptional stars and singers to sing with the "Starstruck" newcomers?

Singing a duet with a good singer is tough enough challenge, but harmonizing with the best is a terrifying test that practically no newcomer could ever hope to pass.

The fact that the newcomers had to sing with vastly experienced and stellar performers like Ogie and Regine in front of tens of thousands of televiewers only added to the challenge's stress factor.

In the future, talent tilt contestants shouldn't be given near-impossible tests like this, to spare them the terror, suffering and humiliation resulting from such unrealistic challenges. Have a heart!

Newscast irritants

Irritants on TV newscasts include: Anchors who feel they have to demonstrate their intelligence by asking follow-up questions of VIPs already interviewed by reporters in the field.

This not only makes the reporters look incompetent (why didn't they ask the questions the anchors are raising?), but it's a pain for viewers, because each anchor has to introduce himself or herself, and ask his or her series of perspicacious questions before the display of intelligence is finally over.

Another off-putting moment: On a recent newscast, we saw a female newscaster reporting the news—while prettily seated on a swivel chair with her legs crossed."

Was this a global first? We tried to recall all of the newscasts we had viewed abroad, but we couldn't remember having witnessed such a chic phenomenon.

Was this the newscast's way of looking informal and comfortable, to appeal to less serious and more aw-shucks viewers?

If so, we submit that the gambit, while cute, is inappropriate to the TV news mode, so the pert newscaster should please desist.

Finally, why is it that we see so many inept, inarticulate and clueless program hosts who look like cartoon characters on the tube?

Where do these interesting creatures come from? What have they done to deserve a program on TV?

More careful analysis reveals that these unlikely hosts are well-connected fat cats whom channel executives just can't say no to, for one cozy reason or other.

But they make for inept and bumptious program hosts who confound, bore or freak out many viewers, so shouldn't channel managers think of their responsibility to viewers before cavalierly foisting these inhospitable hosts on the televiewing nation?

'An Everlasting Love'

The CompanY performs in its pre-Valentine concert, "An Everlasting Love," on Feb. 9 at the ballroom of Hyatt Hotel and Casino. The popular singing group will do its original hits, plus some bossa nova numbers done acapella, classic standards, songs from musicals, and a comedic operetta staging of the Black-Eyed Peas' "My Humps." Call 433-9164 or 247-8643.

ROUNDUP

Asian movie award

HONG KONG—The Hong Kong International Film Festival has launched an Asian film award, in a bid to boost the profile of the Pusan International Film Festival in Busan, South Korea.

The inaugural Asian Film Awards presentation ceremony will be held March 20, the first day of the film festival, organizers said in a statement Tuesday.

The nominee list shows broad representation from different Asian countries.

In the Best Actress category, the finalists include Gong Li and Zhang Ziyi from China and Kim Hye-soo and Lim Soo-jung from South Korea.

Indian movie star Shahrukh Khan is up for Best Actor, competing against Japanese actor Ken Watanabe and veteran Hong Kong actor-singer Andy Lau.

Iran's Jafar Panahi is up for Best Director for "Offside." *AP*

Lea supports breastfeeding

Lea Salonga will cut the ribbon during the blessing of ReBirth Spa's new salon at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center's lobby at Civic Drive, Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

ReBirth Spa is a brainchild of obstetrician-gynecologist Dr. Rebecca B. Singson. Lea has visited the spa twice for lactation massages.

Neverland's final call

Sunday, Feb. 4, is the last chance to catch "Peter Pan" at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

The new musical version of the beloved classic is performed by an international cast of adults and child actors, including Filipinos, plus live musicians and a full choir onstage.

Romantic movies

"ROXANNE"

HBO airs its Valentine's Day specials, "The Gift of Love," from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Feb. 14.

In "Hitch," Albert (Kevin James) bumps and grinds his way into Allegra Cole's (Amber Valletta) heart with the help of Alex Hitchins (Will Smith), New York City's greatest matchmaker.

Charlie (Steve Martin) plays a modern day Cyrano de Bergerac in "Roxanne," who watches the woman he loves fall for another man.

Other Valentine offerings are "The Beautician and The Beast," "Addicted to Love," "Spanglish," "The Perfect Man," "Hitch," "Roxanne," "Bewitched," "The Accidental Tourist," "Closer" and "Tim Burton's The Corpse Bride."

True love

Tonight, "Maalaala Mo Kaya" features Rosanna Roces, Michael de Mesa and Ricardo Cepeda in an episode directed by Nuel Naval and written by Shugo Praico.

The story tells of Lani (Roces) and Junie (de Mesa), who have been married for 23 years. While Lani seems dissatisfied with her life, Junie is devoted to his wife.

When Lani's father falls ill, he himself looks for a doctor (Cepeda), who turns out to be his wife's first and only true love.

Engineering heights

This month, Discovery Channel presents a new series of "Kings of Construction," which tells the story of the most ambitious and groundbreaking large scale 21st century construction projects.

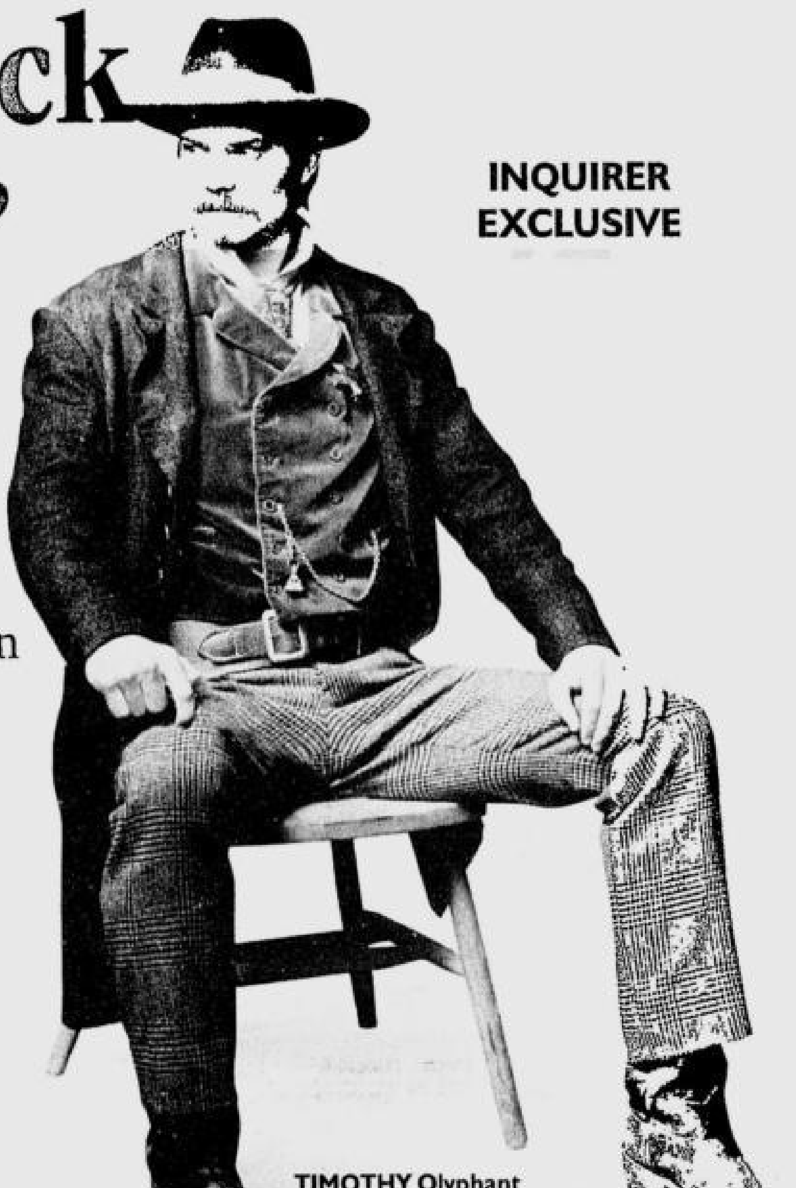
Beginning Feb. 15, the show premieres on Thursday at 10 p.m.

On Seth Bullock & 'Deadwood'

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Upheavals await the characters of HBO's award-winning series in its third and final season

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor



TIMOTHY Olyphant

"I WAS A FAN right off the bat. It's hard to find something that's committed to such a vision," says actor Timothy Olyphant, who revealed to INQUIRER Entertainment in a recent phone interview that he's proud of his and his fellow actors' involvement in the multi-awarded HBO series "Deadwood." The show, created by David Milch ("NYPD Blue") about a South Dakota town heavily populated by both historical and fictional rogues, con men and other criminal types in the late 1800s, is winding up, with its third and final season set to start airing Feb. 5.

Olyphant's character Seth Bullock stands apart from the townsfolk. He's a former sheriff who starts life afresh as a hardware store owner in Deadwood, and who is naturally conflicted by the moral ambiguities presented by the lawless environment. Changes are in store for the character and his fellow denizens of Deadwood in the forthcoming 12 episodes.

"I don't know if [the show] is an acquired taste," Olyphant says. "I think it demands a great deal from its audience, but I think the payoff is great. It's so rare to find a show whose lead characters are that complicated and rich. And any time somebody [new] comes on the show, you feel the show's also about that character. All the roles are dynamic, right down to the smallest one."

Being part of the gritty show for three years has given the actor a steady job in Los Angeles. The location is only a few miles from his home and his daughter's school. Olyphant, who previously played memorable characters in "Scream 2," "Broken Hearts Club" and "Go," will next appear in "Catch and Release" with Jennifer Garner and "Live Free or Die Hard" with Bruce Willis.

How has your character's transformation reflected the intentions of the show's creator?

I think the guy you start with in the beginning of the story … he's not gonna live long that way. I don't think there's any way to become the man that guy became, historically, without making him grow. [David] did this fantastic thing, by finding these two guys, Seth Bullock and Al Swearengen (played by Ian McShane), and essentially watching them learn from one another.

What's the most memorable thing about "Deadwood" at this point in your career?

I think the relationships are the first things. I feel very blessed to have had those experiences and relationships. I can say, creatively, that I learned a great deal … [that I can] take with me to other jobs. Plus, we all just had a great time, too.

How was acting in this series different from working on a movie?

The biggest difference is, you're not quite sure where the story's going. You're kind of watching it develop, although I've done some movies where I guess … we did the same thing, made it up as we went along. But in terms of production and the level of artistry, it was like a movie. That set was amazing, unbelievable. David has an odd way of working—we get the pages the night before. That was an experience to get used to.

Please describe your rapport with the cast. What do you miss most now?

The people that David assembled were class acts through and through. We got nominated for the Screen Actors Guild awards. Dayton Callie, Ian McShane, Brad Dourif, Bill Sanderson—those guys couldn't be more different from one another. And the fact that we came together for something that we became really proud of is just a lovely thing.

How much did you relate to Seth Bullock?

I think that most people at a certain age can relate to [such a thing as] burden of responsibility—as opposed to just stopping and taking a breath, realizing that it's something they actually wanted, and why not enjoy it?

I guess what's lovely about the character is … his handicap is, he wakes up in the morning with such an inner rage. What makes him successful is his ability to transfer that rage into something positive. That's what keeps him from falling apart. I think there are things to be learned from him.

(The final season of "Deadwood" premieres on Feb. 5, 11 p.m., on HBO.)

FERNANDO Hernandez Perez in "Apocalypto" REUTERS

Occasionally gruesome, visually potent

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

It is not entirely humorless, but when it gets dark, 'Apocalypto' can be downright unpleasant

"APOCALYPTO," CONTROVERSIAL DIRECTOR Mel Gibson's latest film, is an occasionally gruesome but visually potent tale that focuses on survival and family ties on the eve of the Mayan people's subjugation by foreign forces in the early 15th century. An indelible, oft-harrowing journey characterized by repetitively violent imagery, the film nevertheless impressively recreates parts of a bygone, culturally distant world, while highlighting universalities about recognizable human relationships.

It's not entirely humorless, but when it gets dark, "Apocalypto" can be both a horrific and downright unpleasant experience.

Gibson, prior to deciding on an ancient Mayan setting, originally conceived of a big, previously unseen "chase film." He gets to showcase that intense, trap-filled foot race sequence much later, and we actually get a story that doesn't feel at all like an afterthought. It's quite simple, actually, plus Gibson and co-writer Farhad Safinia offer a baiting peek into a peaceful tribal community's regular dealings, from its members' hunting chores to less serious activities (like playing pranks on one another!).

Such glimpses into the community dynamics are fairly executed, especially the emphasis on family bonds and respective responsibilities, but these light moments are obvious precursors to terrible things. Still, while short-lived, they're much-appreciated interactions, and come very sparsely later. Soon enough, terror strikes in the form of a brutal attack by a group of slave-hunters. An abducted tribesman, Jungle Paw (Rudy Youngblood), who hid away his pregnant wife Seven (Dalia Hernandez) and young son Turtles Run (Carlos Emilio Baez) before his people fell to the invaders, witnesses and himself goes through a sickening series of indignities.

Again, "Apocalypto" doesn't shy away from the savagery, but when a noticeable pattern emerges, the shock gets muted and some parts just feel taunting (e.g., the human sacrifice/decapitation scenes, which were done in similar angles). Well, the story calls for a depiction of serious bloodletting, and Gibson's done an exceptionally good job at showing the infliction of physical injuries in "Passion of the Christ." It's not surprising that he amps it up a bit this time.

Lingering illustrations of gore notwithstanding, the focus on Jaguar Paw's never-ending ordeal doesn't waver, and instead serves up a methodical and ineludible transformation. Further importance to the character is given by a foreshadowing device—a girl-prophet whose visions of doom rattle some of the barbarians.

But Jaguar Paw only wishes to escape and return to his family, and so the mother of all jungle chases begins. The cinematography by Dean Semler embellishes the unrelenting action with a manic fury, giving Youngblood and the involved cast members' already kinetic and imposing presence an added dynamism.

"Apocalypto" rarely drifts into cautious territory, and its arresting intensity consistently reminds us that Mel Gibson is not at all a master of restraint, uncompromisingly sticks to his vision, and has no qualms whatsoever about making people uncomfortable.

CHOOSE YOUR Valentine SHOW

IT'S THAT TIME OF the year. And so, once again, we are helping you pick the best show for that special date, by asking the concert artists who are going onstage what they have in store for audiences.

Sharon Cuneta

"My Mega Valentine Two," with guests Apo Hiking Society and Pops Fernandez, Feb. 10, Araneta Coliseum. Call 911-5555, 817-4660, 816-2496.

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

Very quietly. Usually at home so we don't have to go through the horrible V-day traffic! We often have someone cater just for Kiko (husband Sen. Francis Pangilinan) and me and our children.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you've ever experienced?

Hard to pick one! Every Valentine's Day *naman* is romantic and simple *lang*!

What's an ideal Valentine date?

Any place outside of the Philippines—Thailand, Paris or Hong Kong, where people don't know us and don't care! Dinner *lang* and *labing-labing* after. Ha-ha-ha! *Puwede rin* in Amanpulo, dinner at the beach.

Who's your fantasy date?

Anyone of the following: Antonio Banderas, Jet Li, Patrick Dempsey, Robert Downey Jr., Matt Lauer ("Today" show—I just realized I've had a crush on him for about 10 years *na*!), Jim Caviezel.

What's the most romantic love song?

Can't name just one. But *one of them* is the theme from "The Promise," because Kiko and I had both loved it before we even met.

If you were not doing a show, who would you watch?

Lea Salonga, Ogie Alcasid and Ai-Ai de las Alas, Agot Isidro, Ara Mina, Erik Santos and Rufa Mae Quinto, Piolo Pascual and Sam Milby, Christian Bautista and Rachelle Ann Go, Kuh Ledesma, Rey Valera and Erik again. These are all not just people I love, but are really talented.

Why should we watch your show?

Because when I do a show, you can bring the whole clan, from grandparents to kids. There'll be lots of great romantic music! And my special guests are icons in their own right.

Then add Louie Ocampo as musical director and Mr. M (Johnny Manahan) as director.

Bayani San Diego Jr.

David Pomeranz & Zsazsa Padilla

"King and Queen of Hearts," Feb. 9, Isla Ballroom, Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, 633-4868, 0917-520-9347

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

Zsazsa: Simple dinner with Dolphy and the kids, but I normally work so I share my "romantic night" with an audience.

David: I try to spend the day with my wife Kelly and son Nicky. Everyone is always busy, so it's a great opportunity to turn the world away and just celebrate our love for each other.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you've ever experienced?

Zsazsa: Onstage. Luckily, every year, I'm singing my heart out to the one I love who's always in the audience.

David: It wasn't on Feb. 14, though. My wife and I went to a restaurant in Paris and spent the whole evening huddled, while I stroked her hair. We stared at each other all night.

What's an ideal Valentine date?

Zsazsa: Dinner, show and the rest…

David: Two people in love who can't keept their hands off each other.

POMERANZ and Padilla

Who's your fantasy date?

Zsazsa: Fantasy fulfilled! I'd love to go to Paris with him.

David: My wife! When we are alone and relaxed.

What's the most romantic love song?

Zsazsa: Among my songs, "Kahit Na," by Willy Cruz and Baby Gil. For selfish or selfless reasons, "Hiram" by George Canseco.

David: Lerner and Loewe's "Gigi" and Rodgers and Hart's "My Romance."

If you were not doing a show, who would you watch?

Zsazsa: Something both Dolphy and I would enjoy. Preferably a show in a ballroom.

David: Bruce Springsteen. Not romantic, but the best rock performer I've ever seen.

Why should we watch your show?

Zsazsa: Because it's a night of love songs and romance!

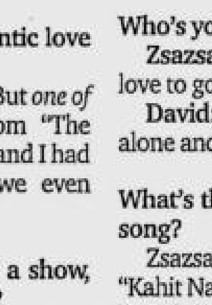
David: Because Zsazsa and I are going to heat up your senses and melt your heart. Bring plenty of Kleenex and make sure the one you're with is someone you plan to kiss before the night is over.

Bayani San Diego Jr.

SHOW TIME

Live AIDS at UP

GISELLE SANCHEZ and Tuesday Vargas star in "The Live AIDS Monologues," an annual comedy variety show in UP Diliman created and staged by members of the UP Samahan ng mga Mag-aaral sa Komunikasyon.



ATE GLOW

EDWIN BACASMAS

It also features actors RS Francisco and Reneboy "Ate Glow" Facunla.

The show will be staged at the Abelardo Hall of UP's College of Music today, tomorrow and Feb. 4 at 7 p.m., with matinees on Feb. 3 and 4 at 2 p.m.

Orange and Lemons

Orange and Lemons will perform tonight at Bagabberde-Roxas Boulevard; tomorrow, 9 p.m., at Silvercity Automall near Tiendesitas.

Winston rocks

Tomorrow, three bands—Chicosci, Kjwan and Sugarfree—kick off "Winston in Concert Morning Sessions" from 7 a.m. onwards at Salt & Pepper, Makati.

Tonight

Piolo Pascual and **Sam Milby** in "A.S.A.P. Live Presents....Heartthrobs "at the **Music Museum** with guest **Ai Ai de las Alas**

"**Melanj on Ice**" at the **Ninoy Aquino Stadium.** Call 911-5555

Route 70 at **Merk's Bar and Bistro**, Greenbelt 3. Call 757-4720.

JOHN Travolta as Edna Turnblad lead the pink pack in "Hairspray."

He's . . . a lady and a 'Hairspray' queen

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Ruben V. Nepales

LOS ANGELES—"I'LL BE IN CHARACTER," said the woman beside me as we posed for a photo.

In an instant, the brunette in a glittering red and gold dress and red shoes struck a coquettish pose, complete with an open-mouthed smile. The woman was **John Travolta**, wearing 25 pounds of costume and body suit as Edna Turnblad, the popular wife and mother character in "Hairspray."

One of the promising big films of 2007, "Hairspray" is the latest addition to a new Hollywood hybrid: a movie is transformed into a stage musical, becomes a Broadway hit, so a film version is made of the musical version.

Late last year, we visited the Toronto set of the film based on the Tony Award-winning musical, which in turn was inspired by the 1988 **John Waters** cult classic set in the 1960s. Taking over the role originally played by the late drag queen, Divine (in the first film), and then by **Harvey Fierstein** onstage (for which he won a Tony), John seemed to be having the time of his life being in his first musical film in over 20 years.

The star's transformation from John Travolta, in a long-sleeved black shirt and blue jeans when we first talked to him, to Edna Turnblad, a charming, plus-sized woman, was amazing. On his last shooting day, he endured for the final time the four-hour process it took to make him the mother of Tracy, a TV dance sensation, also plus-sized, who becomes an activist for racial integration.

In our day-long set visit, we also met and talked to the cast and key behind-the-scenes talents, including: **Nicole "Nikki" Blonsky**, who won the Tracy role over 1,000 aspirants from the US and Canada to as far as the UK and Australia; **Michelle Pfeiffer**, the most glamorous screen villainess this year (Velma Von Tussle); **Queen Latifah** (blonde as Motormouth Maybelle); **Christopher Walken** (Wilbur Turnblad); **Zac Efron** (Link Larkin); Brittany Snow (Amber Von Tussle); **James Marsden** (Corny Collins); **Adam Shankman** (director/choreographer); Craig Zadan and **Neil Meron** (producers, also of the Oscar and Golden Globe-winning "Chicago").

Here's how our set visit went one rainy autumn day in Toronto: Right away, we were shown the sets built inside the huge Showline Harbourside Studios because they were about to be torn down. It was kind of sad to know that these painstakingly built sets, complete with fake grass growing on cracks in the pavement, would be gone in a few hours.

THE COLUMNIST with Travolta in fabulous drag

"Would you like to join me?" offered Oscar-nominated production designer **David Gropman** before we entered the home of the Turnblads. The interiors were filled with details, down to a black and white wedding photo of John and Christopher as Edna and Wilbur. "I'm completely unsentimental," replied David when we asked him if he would keep anything before the sets were demolished. "Maybe I'll keep the wedding portrait," he added after giving the matter a second thought.

At costume designer **Rita Ryack**'s lair, we saw the costumes and custom-made shoes (they are huge) for John, including a black and white see-through pant-suit inspired by that memorable outfit worn by Barbra Streisand to the Oscars. John later told us that he did not get to wear that in the film.

John wanted to look really feminine, Rita told us. "He's by far the prettiest Edna I've ever seen," she declared. What do you say to that, **Harvey Fierstein** and Bruce Vilanch (who also played Mrs. Turnblad onstage)?

Then Queen Latifah sat down to talk with us. She said of John: "He has been just a joy to work with—so funny and great. His body is so cool. And his booty! He's got nicer legs than all of us."

Next was John, before his Mrs. Turnblad makeover. Looking good (he has slimmed down) and in high spirits, the star of the classic musical film, "Grease" was already in a bit of Edna mode. After he stood up to show how he wanted the body suit to look—"big breasts, a big ass and a little waist like Sophia Loren if she gained 200 pounds"—he shook his hips as he sat down.

Asked about his daughter Ella, 5, he whipped up his cell phone ("This is the first time I've had a cell phone") and attempted to play a voice message that she had left him. After several unsuccessful tries, the proud father recited what Ella said and being the actor that he is, he did it with the little girl's intonation: "Hi, daddy. I cut my hair. It looks cute. I put it in pigtails."

When asked if Ella is already a performer at home, which he shares with wife, actress **Kelly Preston** and an older child, Jett, the "Saturday Night Live" star enthused, "Oh, my God, is she ever. She'll sing full-out numbers like I used to when I was a kid." He vamped it up as he imitated Ella singing the lyrics to a song recorded by **Natalie Cole** and many others, "Orange Colored Sky": "I was walkin' along, mindin' my business…"

Visiting the room of special makeup designer **Tony Gardner**, full of silicon arms and latex legs for Edna, was like stepping into Hannibal Lecter's house. And indeed Tony started learning his craft from **Rick Baker** ("The Silence of the Lambs"), the Hollywood master in special effects and make-up artistry. Tony said that he did a full body cast of John at the latter's home garage to get a perfect fit for the body suit.

Back in the interview room, Tony and Grammy Award-winner lyricist **Scott Wittman** played some of the new songs that he and Marc Shaiman, also a multi-awardee, composed for the film. "I Can Wait," a new ballad beautifully sung by Nikki as Tracy and "Big, Blonde and Beautiful," performed by Queen Latifah, sound like absolute show-stoppers.

Finally, we went to the main set, where they were filming the movie's big finale—the announcement of "Miss Teenage Hairspray" in a TV show similar to that 1960s staple, "American Bandstand." Director Adam came over to chat, pointing to us that even the real cameras were outfitted to look like TV cameras in the '60s. And the extras playing the audience in TV studio were also dressed in the styles of the era.

Michelle Pfeiffer, ultra-slim, also approached our group to say hi and talk. "It's really fun to be in the studio again," shared the actress who proved she can sing in "The Fabulous Baker Boys" and is singing here too. She added, "I missed it." Zac, the star of Disney's TV hit "High School Musical," and Brittany Snow, also came by.

At dinner break, we stood next to Christopher Walken as we pondered the salad choices. "I'm too old for this," he told us with a smile but we knew he was in his element in this genre—the guy can sing and dance.

Back on the set, John emerged in full regalia as Edna Turnblad to much attention and lots of picture-taking with the cast and crew since this was his last day on the set. "This is my final number," he excitedly told us, those smiling John Travolta eyes recognizable even underneath all that makeup and latex. During the takes, he and Christopher make like a truly sweet couple, the former holding on to the latter's arm.

Then there was a big applause for Christopher after his very last take. He acknowledged the cheers as he exited the studio. John, who still had some scenes to do, stayed in character as he also clapped for Christopher. With his heel-shod feet pointed in lady-like fashion, he applauded demurely.

Below are excerpts of our interview with John.

How did you react when they first offered you this role?

I said, why do you need a man? They said, it's a tradition. I said, but it's clearly a man in that part. I don't want to play a man playing a woman. That's not fun to me. It's one joke. I said, but if you let me play a woman, that would be more fun. It's going to take a lot. You're going to have to make her, instead of like a refrigerator, you're going to have to give me big breasts, a big ass and a little waist like **Sophia Loren** if she gained 200 pounds. Or **Anita Ekberg** if she gained 200 pounds. She should make you think that in her day, she was quite something. But she got older and gained weight. In her mind, however, she is still that young woman.

I also said, I need you to make a pleasant face, like a **Delta Burke** or a Roseanne Barr. It can't be that you will see a beard coming through. I said that if you could let me go there—and agree with all these—I'd have something to do. I could do my best as though you hired a woman to do it.

When we first saw you as Edna Turnblad, we saw a different person, except in your eyes. We saw John Travolta's eyes. Do you see a resemblance?

My sister Annie got mad because I said, Annie, she looks like you. She said, oh yeah, if I ate Ellen (their sister).

What were your thoughts when you first saw yourself costumed as Edna Turnblad in the mirror?

I wasn't going to say anything until I saw the screen test. In the screen test, I giggled because I chose to play her spirited-chipper, cheery and happy. Once I bought it, I could play her. I needed to buy it with my own eyes and heart. I needed to believe it.

You decided not to do a real girly type of voice when you recorded the songs. You kept your voice somewhat.

I did keep my voice. I decided that if I disguised my voice too much, the viewers wouldn't have that much fun. You gotta have a little fun seeing John Travolta in it, in the eyes, the dance moves or vocally. There's gotta be enough (of me) there to make it worth for them to hire me. I can't completely hide.

Tell us about the casting of Christopher Walken as your husband.

I wanted them to hire Christopher Walken because I know Chris' history. I said, I want a pedigreed husband. I want a husband who knows musicals. Musicals are an art of their own. You have to believe your dialogue into a song. If you don't believe it, the audience does not believe it. I know Chris Walken was comfortable with it.

(More on Sunday)

E-mail the columnist at rvnepales_5585@yahoo.com.

Website: www.inquirer.net/entertainment

LIVING Stars

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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JANICE DE BELEN

TAIL TALES

NOW, I HAVE TWO CHOW Chows—two-year-old Tyler (far left) and five-month-old Josh. I treat them like babies! Tyler has quarterly vet appointments for de-worming. But since Josh is younger, I bring him to the clinic more often for immunization. I spoil them. In return, they give me joy and unconditional love. They make me feel protected. Tyler sleeps in my room, and Josh in my kids' room. It's as if they watch over us at night. *Bayani San Diego Jr.*

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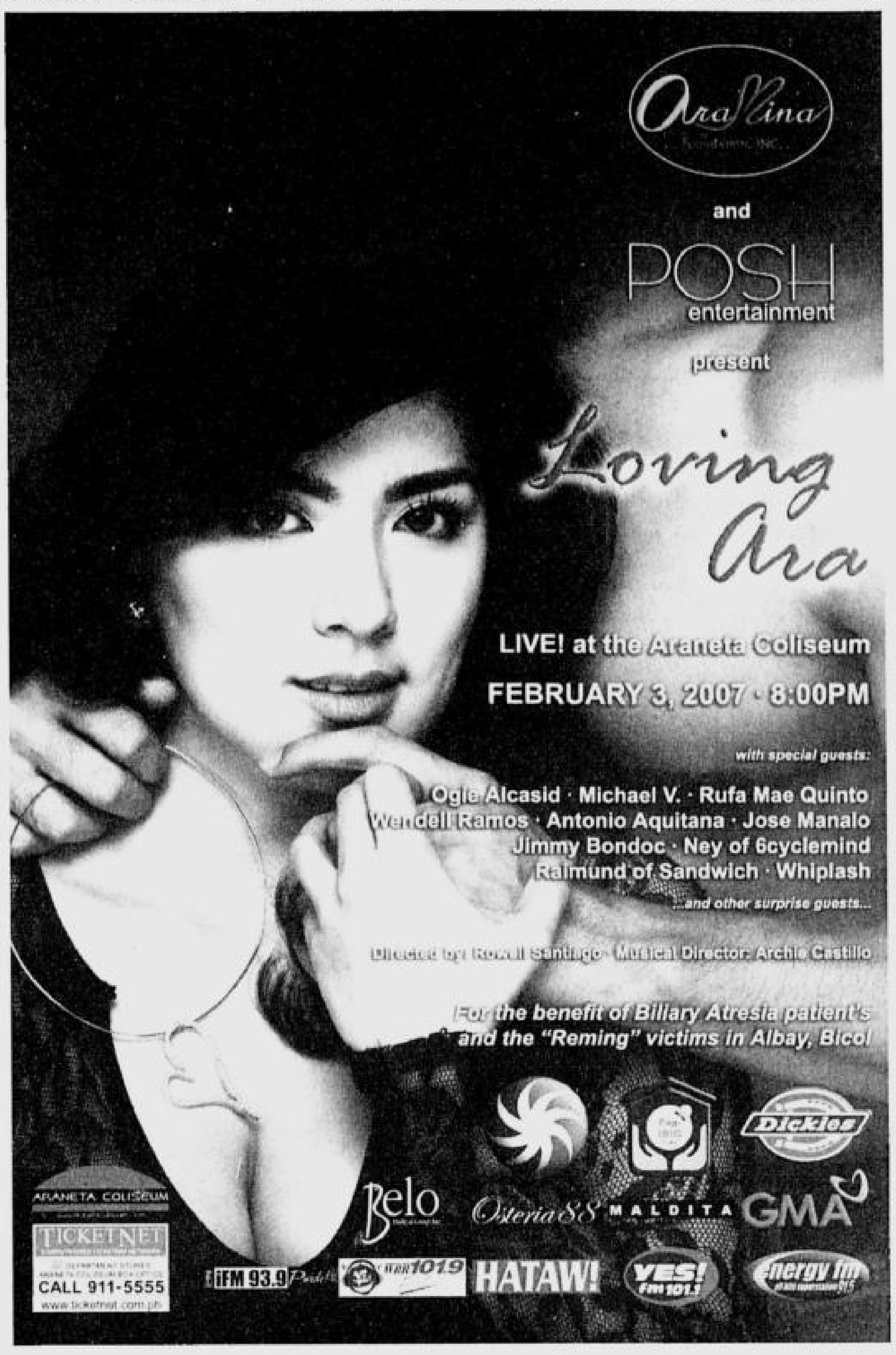

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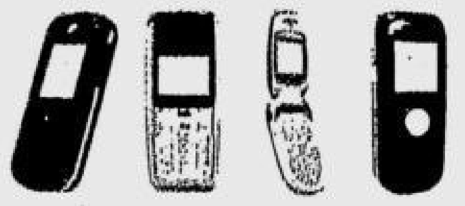

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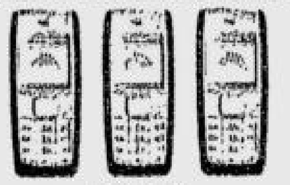

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X 44
3 SAW - 3

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(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736
1 AGENT X 44
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 ERAGON
2 KAMASUTRA

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 DOGBOG SARADO
3 PARAISO SA GUBAT
4 FRAGIALE

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 BOA
2 BEDROOM SECRET
3 AGENT X 44
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 KARIBAL

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 FRAGILE
2 AGENT X 44
3 KARELASYON
4 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 BLOOD CHOCOLATE
2 KAMASUTRA

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For inquiries, call:
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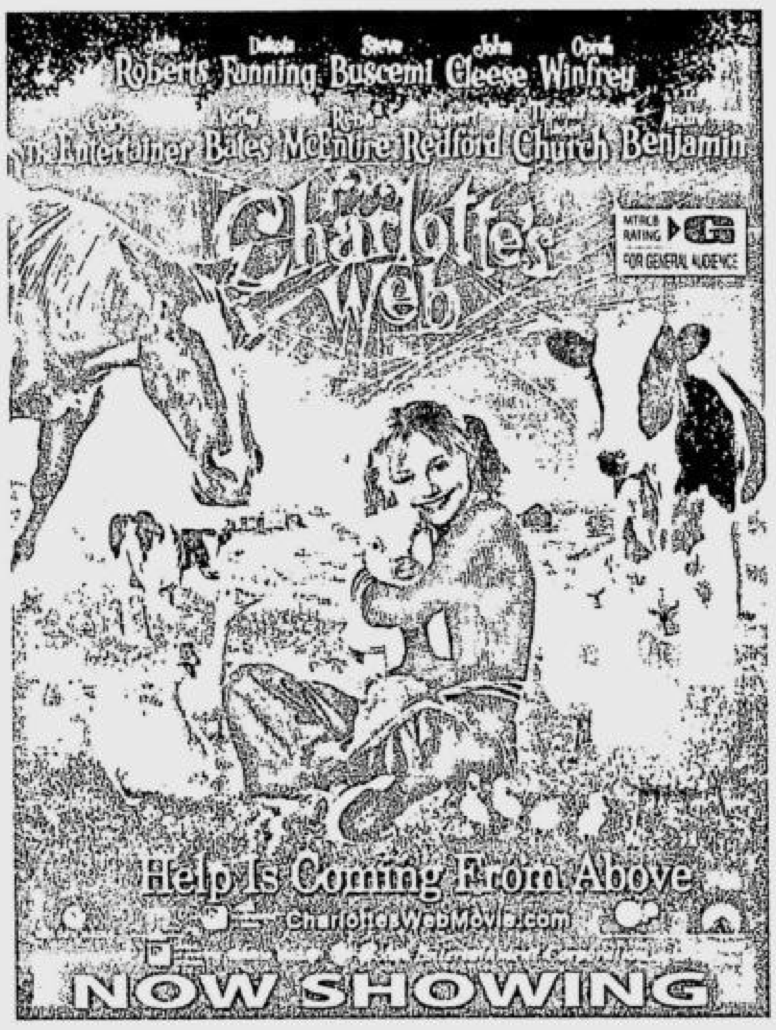
1	CHARLOTTE'S WEB	1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:55, 11:10	G
2	APOCALYPTO	2:20, 5:20, 8:20, 11:10	R-18
3	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00	G
4	BLOOD & CHOCOLATE	1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00	PG-13


Julia Roberts
Dakota Fanning
Steve Buscemi
John Cleese
Oprah Winfrey
Cedric The Entertainer
Kathy Bates
Reba McEntire
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André Benjamin
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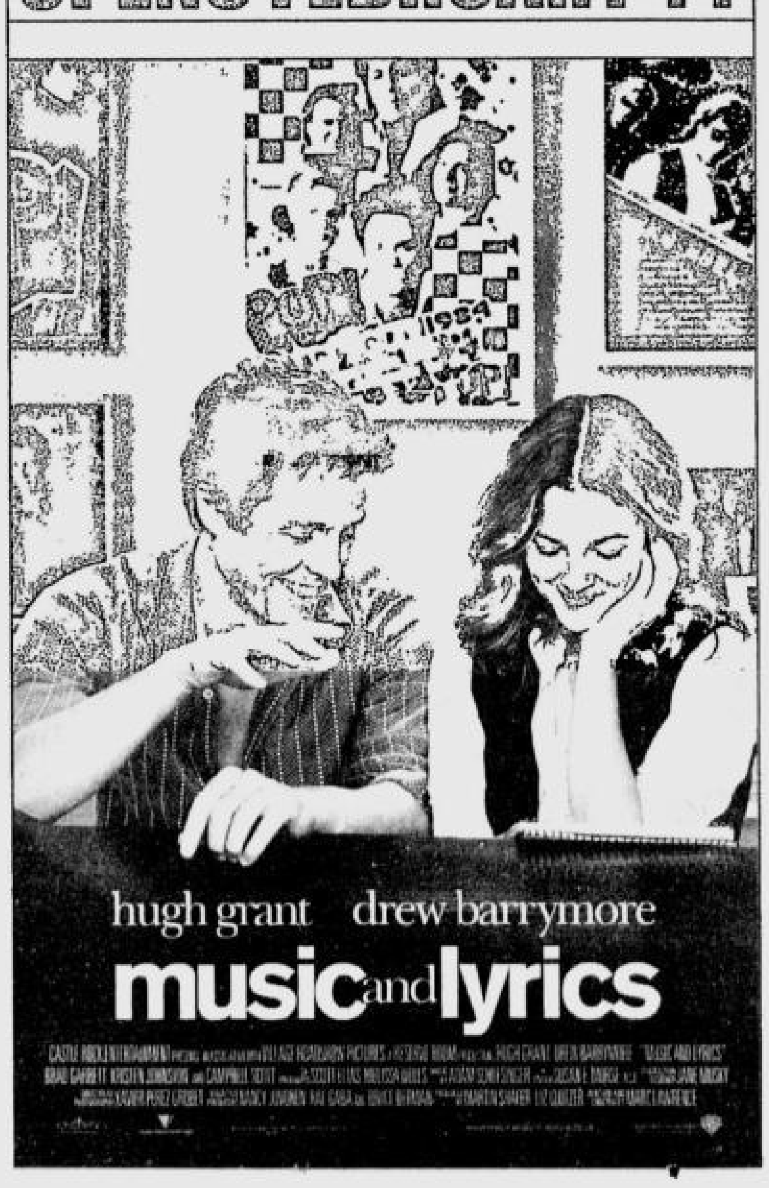
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CINEMA 1 BABEL
10:50 , 1:45 , 4:40
7:35 , 10:30
PG-13

CINEMA 2 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
11:50 , 2:10 , 4:25
6:40 , 9:00 PG-13
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CINEMA 3 APOCALYPTO
10:50 , 1:40 , 4:30
7:20 , 10:10
R-18

CINEMA 4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
11:40 , 2:20 , 5:00
7:40 , 10:20 GP

CINEMA 5 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
10:45, 1:10 , 3:30
5:50,8:10,10:30 GP

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MUSIC MUSEUM

Feb 02 & 03 , 2007	Piolo Pascual and Sam Milby	8:30 PM
Feb 7 & 8 , 2007	Agot Isidro "Back to Basics"	8:30 PM
Feb 13 & 14 , 2007	Ogie Alcasid	8:00 PM
Feb 16 & 17 , 2007	Passion Y Fuego	8:00 PM

TEATRINO
PROMENADE GREENHILLS

EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00 PM
Feb 06 & 20 , 2007	DYORDS KO PO	8:30 PM
February 11 , 2007	LOVI POE "A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION"	9:00 PM
Feb 13 & 14 , 2007	RAYMUND LAUCHENGCO	8:30 PM

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Oscar gowns

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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 DEJA VU • THX
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

6 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

2 APOCALYPTO
1:15 4:10 7:05 10:00

7 BABEL
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

3 indieSine's Featured FILM: ICU BED # 7
1:30 3:30 5:30 7:30 9:30

8 LITTLE CHILDREN
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

9 SAW 3
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

5 CHARLOTTE's WEB
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00

10 AGENT X44
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 APOCALYPTO 12:35 3:40 6:45 10:00

2 BABEL 12:00 2:30
SAW 3 5:10 7:25 9:50

5 AGENT X44
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

3 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

6 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:25 10:00

4 LITTLE CHILDREN
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

7 CHARLOTTE's WEB
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 ROB-B-HOOD
1:10 3:40 6:20 9:00

5 SAW 3
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
1:15 3:50 6:25 9:00

6 LITTLE CHILDREN
1:20 4:00 6:40 6:40 9:10

3 APOCALYPTO
11:55 2:25 5:55 9:00

7 CHARLOTTE's WEB
11:00 1:25 3:50 6:25 9:00

4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:05

8 AGENT X44
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

NOVALICHES 935-8231 / 935-3229-30

1 APOCALYPTO
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
3 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
1:30 3:55 6:20 8:40

2 APOCALYPTO
11:45 2:40 5:35 8:30

3 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
1:15 3:45 6:15 8:40

4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
12:55 3:20 5:45 6:10

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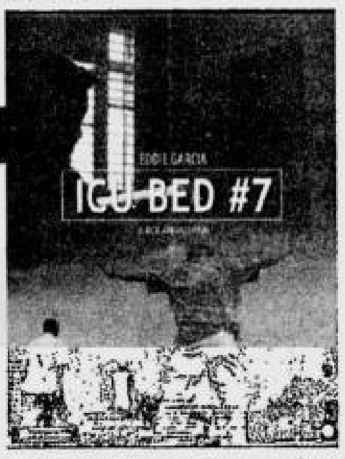

MTRCB Rating: R13

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
2 FRAGILE
3 AGENT X44
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

LIPA (043) 757-3064 (043) 312-5870

1 DECK THE HALLS
2 AGENT X44
3 LITTLE CHILDREN
4 FRAGILE

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 ARTHUR and the INVISIBLES
2 APOCALYPTO
3 AGENT X44
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 APOCALYPTO
2 AGENT X44
3 DECK THE HALLS
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 APOCALYPTO
2 SHAOLIN vs. EVIL DEAD 2
3 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
4 AGENT X44

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 DECK THE HALLS
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 AGENT X44
4 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX
5 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
6 APOCALYPTO

BACOLOD (034) 441-0463 (034) 441-0459

1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 A GOOD YEAR
5 AGENT X44
6 FEAST

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 AGENT X44
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
5 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX
6 ROB-B-HOOD

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IMAX
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4:45PM 7:05PM 9:25PM
Matinee Fee- P200 Primetime Fee- P260
T-REX IN 3D
10:30AM 11:45AM 1:00PM 2:15PM 3:30PM
Admission Fee- P200
1 DEJA VU
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
4 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
5 BABEL
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO/ AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
PREMIERE CINEMA
AGENT X44
CENTERSTAGE
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
THE PODIUM
CINEMA 1
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
CINEMA 2
CHARLOTTE'S WEB
633-8976

SM NORTH EDSA 929-5452
1 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
2 DEJA VU
3 BLOOD DIAMOND/ AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
5 BABEL
6 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
7 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
8 AGENT X44
9 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10 ROB-B-HOOD
11 ERAGON
12 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
1 BABEL
2 ERAGON
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
5 DEJA VU
6 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
9 AGENT X44
10 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
11 ROB-B-HOOD
12 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 DEJA VU
3 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
4 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
5 ROB-B-HOOD
6 AGENT X44
7 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
8 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
9 ERAGON
10 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11 BLOOD DIAMOND
12 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
2 ANNAPOLIS
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
5 AGENT X44
6 GRIDIRON GANG
7 ERAGON
8 ROB-B-HOOD
9 BLOOD DIAMOND
10 DEJA VU

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
3 ERAGON
4 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 AGENT X44

SM SOUTHMALL 806-6888
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
3 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
4 AGENT X44
5 BABEL
6 ERAGON
7 DEJA VU
8 ROB-B-HOOD
9 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

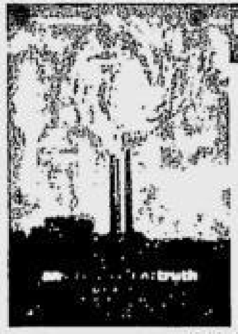
SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
3 AGENT X44
4 ERAGON

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240
1 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
4 ERAGON
5 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
8 BABEL
9 DEJA VU
10 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11 ROB-B-HOOD
12 AGENT X44

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 SHAOLIN VS EVIL DEAD
3 AGENT X44
4 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 TENACIOUS D
3 AGENT X44
4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975
1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 AGENT X44



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1 ERAGON
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
5 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
6 AGENT X44
7 ROB-B-HOOD
8 DEJA VU

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 DECK THE HALLS
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 AGENT X44
6 SHAOLIN VS EVIL DEAD

SM CITY MARILAO (044)6332013-17
1 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
2 AGENT X44
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
4 SPIRIT TRAP

LUZON

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 LIGALIG
3 AGENT X44
4 SHAOLIN VS EVIL DEAD

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637081-85
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 AGENT X44
4 DECK THE HALLS
5 SPIRIT TRAP
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CIY LIPA (043) 756-7925
1 FRAGILE
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 AGENT X44
4 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80
1 AGENT X44
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 FEAST
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X44
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X44
3 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
4 TENACIOUS D

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5341265-66
1 AGENT X44
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876
1 ERAGON
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
5 DEJA VU
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
7 AGENT X44
8 BLOOD DIAMOND

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SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422
1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 RESERVED
3 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
4 AGENT X44
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
6 BLOOD DIAMOND
7 RESERVED
8 A GOOD YEAR

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3 AGENT X44
4 SPIRIT TRAP
5 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
6 A GOOD YEAR

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2 ERAGON
3 AGENT X44
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

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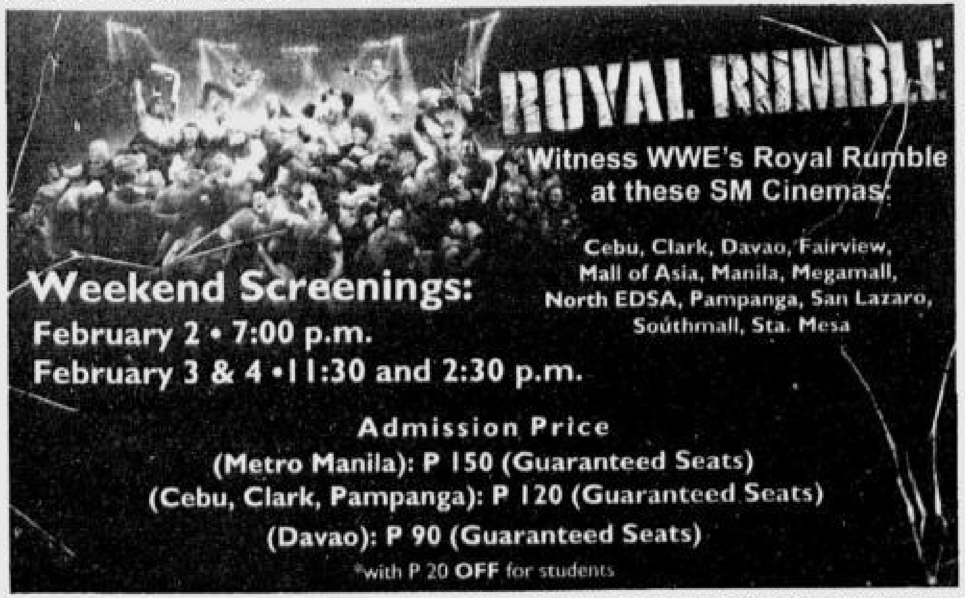

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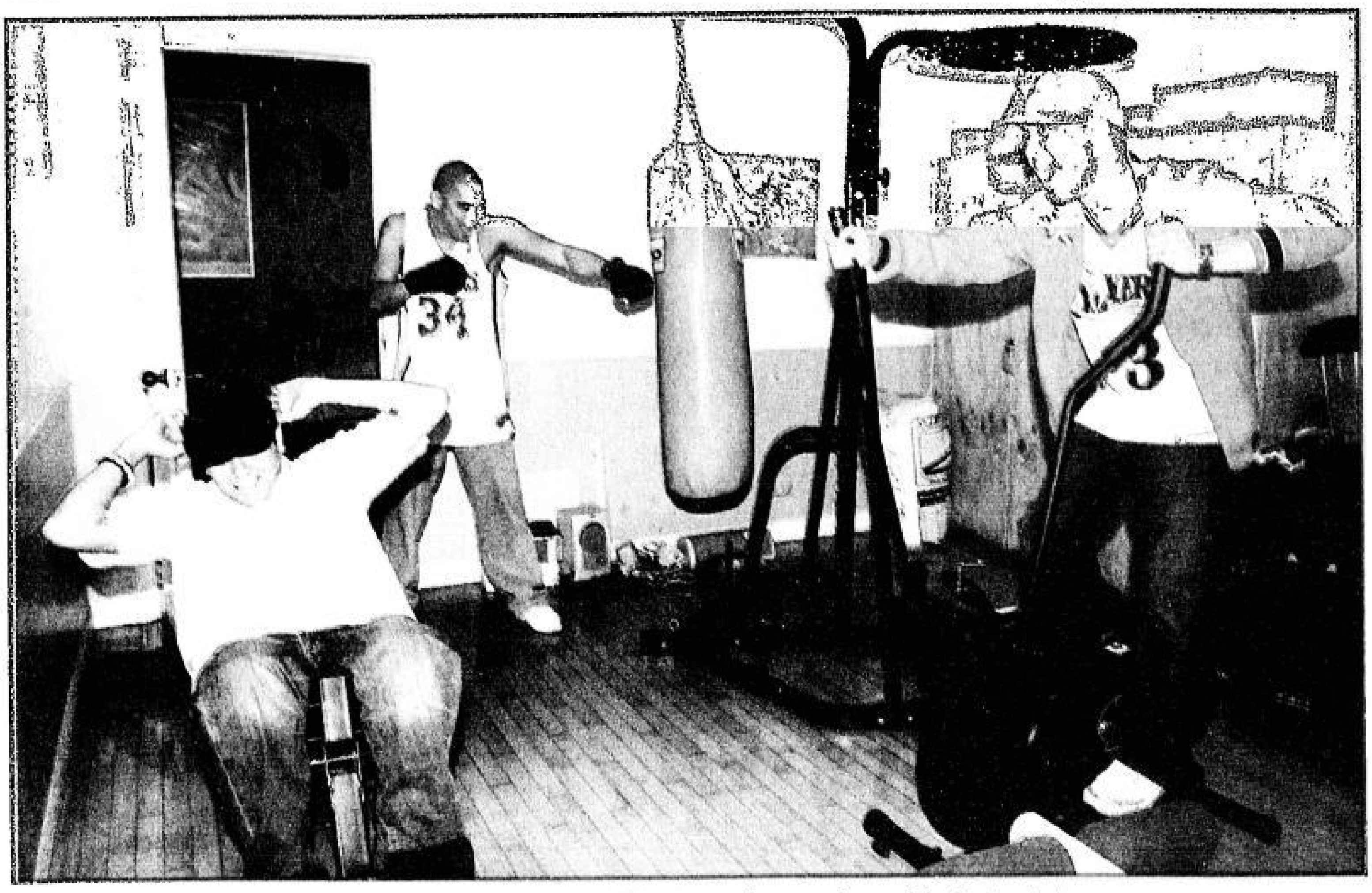
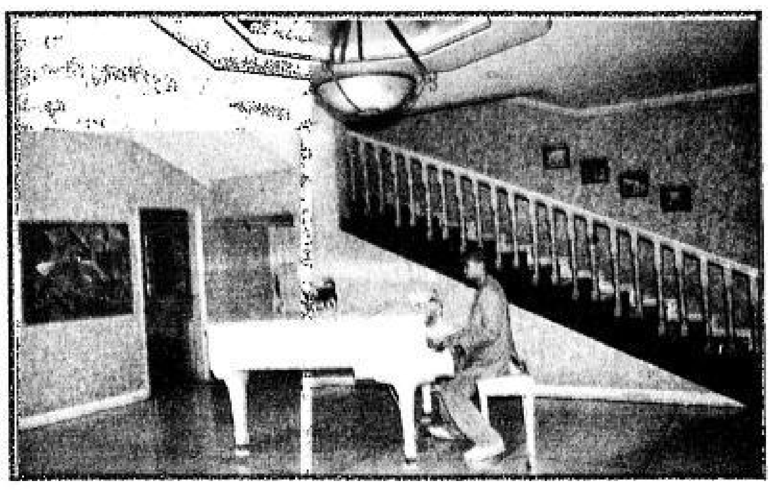
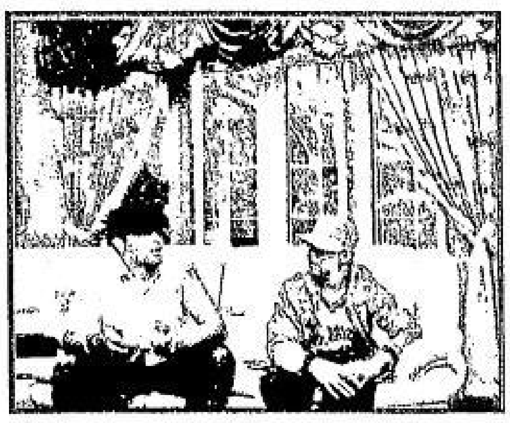


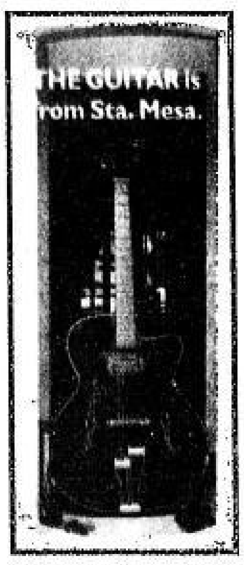
JIMMY does some sit-ups, JayR pummels the punching bag and Kris tries another exercise machine in the mini-gym.



THE BABY grand in the reception area is a job requirement, the R&B singer insists. There's another piano upstairs.

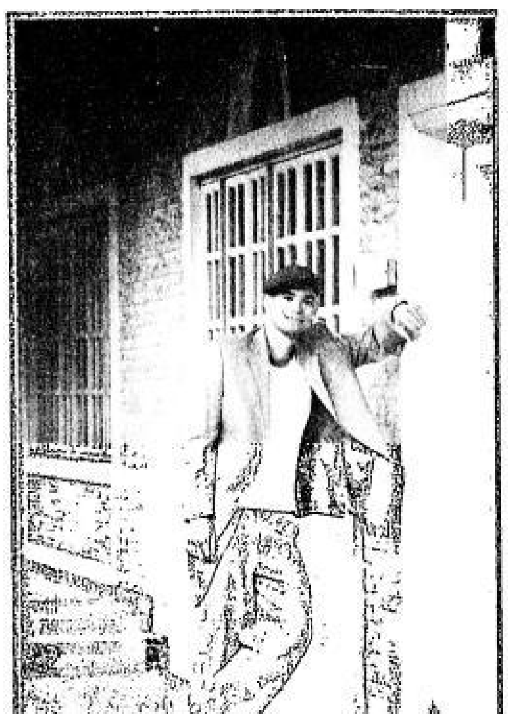


JIMMY and Kris can spend an entire day playing video games on the Xbox and PlayStation in the living room.



THE GUITAR is from Sta. Mesa.

Men's rooms



THERE'S a star at the door. JayR rents the house from a cousin.

JAYR and Kris play pool in the billiard hall.

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Rudy Esperas

WELCOME TO JAY-R'S "CRIB."

The R&B musician and his housemates, singer Kris Lawrence and songwriter-record producer Jimmy Muna, share a sprawling, spanking home in Quezon City, which they call their "crib" and/or "headquarters" for their multi-media entertainment company.

JayR, Kris and Jimmy have been friends for a decade now—since they were teenagers in Panorama City, California.

"Kris and I attended the same high school, St. Genevieve," JayR relates.

"I met JayR when he was 15 and I was 17. We were members of the band First Impression," recalls Jimmy, who's originally from Mexico. Kris later joined the a cappella group.

'Blood brothers'

All three bear the F.I. tattoo which, they say, make them "blood brothers."

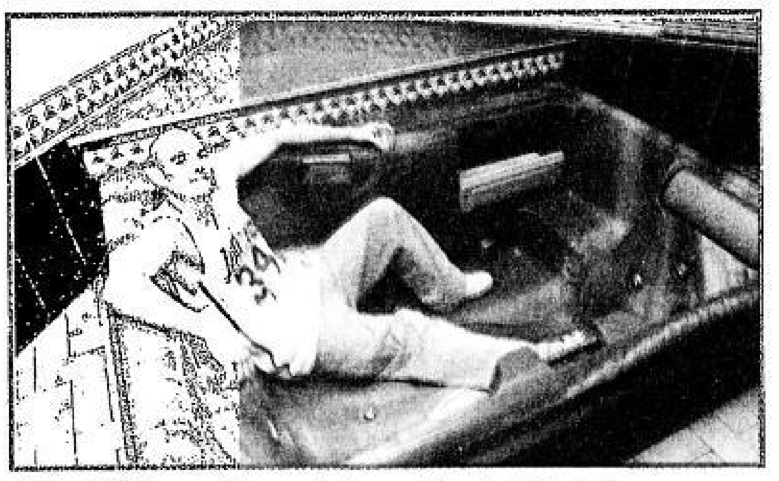
"They are the closest I have to a family here," says JayR.

"We look out for each other," Kris adds.

"He's our bodyguard," JayR jokingly says of Jimmy.

Together, they have formed the production company Backhome, which produces concerts and events; and a mini-music company, Smash Brothers, that churns out songs for other artists and commercial jingles for various companies.

A "one-stop shop" is how they describe their home. "Everything is here," JayR says.



THE HUNKY star tries out the Jacuzzi for size. The bathroom features an art deco design, complete with glass blocks.

He built the office at the back of the house, where there's also a dance rehearsal space near the basketball court and a state-of-the-art recording studio and gym on the second floor.

Sharing space is both practical and fun for the boys.

HOME BODY

"This place pretty much runs itself," JayR insists.

Since the three grew up in the US, they are used to keeping house on their own. "We're all very tidy. When we bring a glass of water to the living room, we make it a point to return it to the kitchen," JayR explains.

"We also take turns in taking care of the pets," Kris adds.

JayR has gathered quite a menagerie—11 dogs, and fishes and turtles in the aquarium and garden pond.

He says he rented this 1,000-square meter property from a cousin precisely because it has plenty of space for his beloved dogs.

Not all work

"We used to live in a condo unit," JayR recalls. "It was too small. The only thing I miss about it is the breathtaking view of Metro Manila; it was on the 20th floor."

The new pad gives the trio plenty of room to pursue diverse endeavors.

But it's not all work.

"On our days off, we spend 24 hours playing computer games on the Xbox and PlayStation," JayR points out.

"Among our favorite games are 'Fight Night,' 'Gears of War' and 'Fall of Man: Resistance,'" says Jimmy.

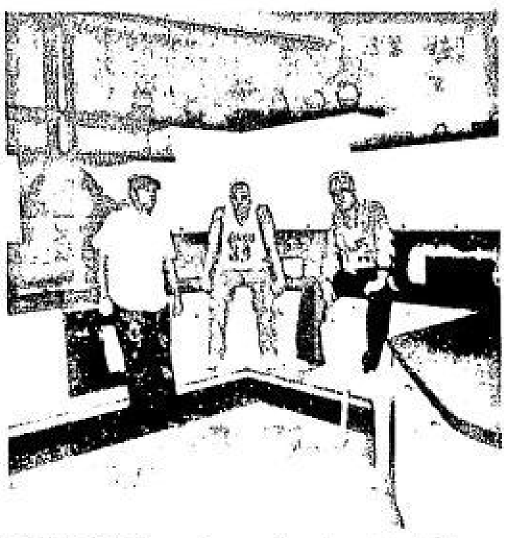
"Or we play billiards. Work out in the gym," Kris says.

"Or shoot hoops on the court," JayR quips.

Boys will be boys.

Musicians JayR, Kris Lawrence and Jimmy Muna, who are also housemates, say their 'crib' has everything they need

KRIS and JayR polish their moves in the dance rehearsal area.



THE BOYS keep the entire place, including the kitchen, spiffy. "We all pitch in," says Kris.

THE GARDEN, which has a gazebo, gives the dogs plenty of space to run around in.

THE SINGER built the recording studio for the entire gang's use.

Show biz celebs cue up for Mowelfund

ENTERTAINERS, BUSINESSMEN AND POLITICIANS were pitted against each other in the 9-ball celebrity billiard tournament dubbed "Pakners" at the Teatrino in Promenade, Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila last Jan. 24.

The winners' incentive: the chance to challenge international billiards champion Efren "Bata" Reyes.

"Pakners," also the title of Fernando Poe Jr.'s last film (which starred Reyes), was a fundraiser for Mowelfund.

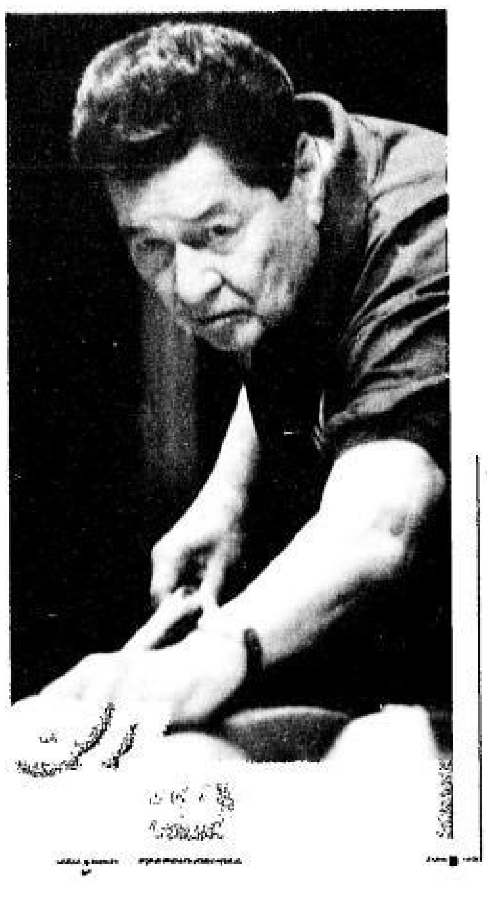
Billiard icons Django Bustamante, Ruby Len Amit and Mary Anne Basas took part in the games.

LEO Martinez, Film Academy of the Philippines director-general.

DJANGO Bustamante and Ricky Davao

EFREN "Bata" Reyes and Niño Muhlach.

SUSAN Roces and Boots Anson-Roa, Mowelfund executive director.



EDDIE GARCIA

PHOTOS BY ERIK ARAZAS